THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

The Life and Ministry of Jesus.

SHORT MEDITATIONS FOR TWELVE MONTHS.

BY RICHARD F. CLARKE, S.J.

LONDON:
CATHOLIC TRUTH SOCIETY,
69 SOUTHWARK BRIDGE ROAD, S.E.

1898.

44450

PREFACE.

THE following Meditations are intended to serve the reader for a year, beginning with the first Sunday in Advent, and ending with the last week after Pentecost. They follow as nearly as may be the course of the Ecclesiastical Year, but the variety in the number of the Sundays after the Epiphany renders it necessary to leave the reader, in years when Easter falls either very early or very late, to look to some other portion of the book to supply any days that may be unprovided for. If he comes to the end of the Meditations on the "Hidden Life" before Shrove Tuesday, he will do well to fill the gap from the two concluding weeks of "The Ministry of Jesus." If, on the other hand, he should find himself lacking towards the end of Pentecost, he will be able to supply the intervening days from Meditations omitted from the "Hidden Life."

The author of these Meditations asks that he may not be forgotten in the prayers of those who make use of them.

31, Farm Street, London.

Feast of the Prayer of Our Lord, 1892.

FATHERS' LIBRARY,
ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH
SAN JOSE, California
ST. ALPHONSUS LIBRARY
CAL.

CONTENTS.

THE APPROACH OF THE KING.

MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT.

	page
What Advent is	3
The Divine Decree	4
The Announcement of His Coming	5
The Long Darkness	6
Transient Gleams	7
The Golden Thread	8
The Causes of Delay	9
The Approaching Day	10
The Fulfilment of the Decree	11
The Forerunner of the King	12
The Forerunner's Message	13
The Forerunner's Office	14
Hope	15
Rejoice	16
Rejoice always	17
The Second Coming of Christ	18
The Signs of His Coming	19
The Uncertainty of His Coming	20
The Preparation for His Approach	21
The Dangers of the Careless Soul	22
O Sapientia	23
O Adonai	24
O Radix Jesse	25
O Clavis David	26
O Oriens	27
O Rex Gentium	28
O Emmanuel	29
Christmas Eve	30

THE HOLY INFANCY.

MEDITATIONS FROM CHRISTMAS TO THE FEAST OF OUR LADY'S ESPOUSALS.

	Page
The Nativity	33
The New-born Child	34
The Holy Mother	35
The Foster-Father	36
The Little Maid	37
The Angels' Song	38
The Shepherds' Visit	39
The Circumcision	40
Mary at the Circumcision	41
The Meaning of the Circumcision	42
The Humility of the Circumcision	43
The Name of Jesus	44
The Epiphany	45
The Magi	46
Their Journey	47
The Magi's Stay at Jerusalem	48
Their Arrival at Bethlehem	49
The Finding of Christ	50
Their Gifts: (1) Gold	51
Their Gifts: (2) Frankincense	52
Their Gifts: (3) Myrrh	53
Their Return Home	54
Herod's Vengeance	55
The Angel's Warning	56
Joseph's Obedience	57
The Perils of the Way	58
The Arrival in Egypt	59
The Long Waiting	60
The Return Home	61
The Arrival in Palestine	62

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

MEDITATIONS FROM THE FEAST OF OUR LADY'S ESPOUSALS TO SHROVE TUESDAY.

The Hidden Life	65
Mary's Hidden Life	66

page

The Hidden Life at Bethlehem 67
The Days of Purification 68
The Lessons of the Purification 69
The Presentation in the Temple 70
Holy Simeon 71
The Prophecy of Simeon 72
Holy Anna 73
The Hidden Life in Egypt 74
The Cottage at Nazareth 75
Jesus at Nazareth 76
The Carpenter's Shop 77
Mary at Nazareth 78
Joseph at Nazareth 79
The Obedience of Jesus 80
The Brethren of Jesus 81
The Hidden Life at Nazareth 82
The Lesson of the Hidden Life 83
The Learning of the Lesson 84
The Obstacles to its Acquirement 85
The Visit to Jerusalem 86
The Journey Home 87
The Search after Jesus 88
The Absence of Jesus 89
Other Causes of the Absence of Jesus 90
Jesus in the Temple 91
Jesus among the Doctors 92
The Finding of Jesus 93
Mary's Remonstrance 94
Jesus' Reply 95
The Youth of Jesus 96
The Manhood of Jesus 97
The Manual Labour of Nazareth 98
The approaching time of Separation 99
Mary's Meditations 100
Farewell to Nazareth 101

THE SACRED PASSION.

MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN LENT.

Preliminary Meditation—How to Meditate on the Passion 105

page
Ash Wednesday—The Anticipation of the Passion 106
First Thursday in Lent—The Preliminaries of the Passion 107
First Friday in Lent—The Supper in Simon's House 108
First Saturday in Lent—The Eating of the Paschal Lamb 109
First Sunday in Lent—Jesus' Desire for His Sufferings 110
Monday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Washing of the Feet 111
Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Institution of the Blessed Eucharist . . 112
Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Farewell Discourse of Jesus 113
Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent—On the Road to Gethsemani 114
Friday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Sacred Agony in the Garden 115
Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent—The Intensity of the Sacred Agony 116
Second Sunday in Lent—The Help for the Saints in the Sacred Agony 117
Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent—The Consolations of the Sacred Agony . . 118
Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent—The Sequel of the Sacred Agony 119
Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent—The Betrayal of Jesus 120
Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent—The Apprehension of Jesus 121
Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent—Jesus led away Captive 122
Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent—In the House of Annas 123
Third Sunday in Lent—In the Palace of Caiaphas 124
Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent—The Condemnation of Christ 125
Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent—St. Peter's Denial of Jesus 126

page

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent—St. Peter's Repentance 127
Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Jesus in the Guard-room of Caiaphas 128
Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Jesus is dragged before Pilate 129
Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent—Judas' Repentance 130
Fourth Sunday in Lent—Jesus before Pilate . . 131
Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—Jesus before Herod 132
Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—Barabbas or Jesus? 133
Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—The Scourging 134
Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—The Crowning with Thorns 135
Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—Ecce Homo 136
Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent—The Condemnation to Death 137
Fifth Sunday in Lent—Jesus sets out on the Way to Calvary 138
Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—Via Dolorosa 139
Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—Jesus Meets His Holy Mother 140
Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—Simon of Cyrene 141
Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—Jesus is nailed to the Cross 142
Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—The Deriding of Jesus 143
Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent—The Good Thief 144
Sixth Sunday in Lent—Jesus Commends His Disciples to His Holy Mother's Care 145
Monday in Holy Week—The Dereliction of Jesus on the Cross 146

page

Tuesday in Holy Week—The Thirst upon the Cross 147
Wednesday in Holy Week—The Death of Jesus 148
Maundy Thursday—Jesus' mystical Death in the Blessed Eucharist 149
Good Friday—The Descent from the Cross .. 150
Easter Eve—The Entombment 151

RESURREXIT.

MEDITATIONS FROM EASTER TO THE ASCENSION.

Easter Sunday—The Resurrection 155
Easter Monday—The Appearance of Jesus to His Holy Mother 156
Easter Tuesday—The Holy Women on their way to the Sepulchre 157
Wednesday in Easter Week—The Holy Women at the Sepulchre 158
Thursday in Easter Week—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Mary Magdalen 159
Friday in Easter Week—Why Jesus appeared first to St. Mary Magdalen 160
Saturday in Easter Week—How Jesus appeared to St. Mary Magdalen 161
Low Sunday—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Peter 162
Monday in Second Week after Easter—The Appearance of Jesus to the Holy Women 163
Tuesday in Second Week after Easter—The Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus 164
Wednesday in Second Week after Easter—Jesus appears to the Two Disciples 165
Thursday in Second Week after Easter—The Disciples tell Jesus their Troubles .. 166
Friday in Second Week after Easter—The Discourse of Jesus to the Disciples .. 167
Saturday in Second Week after Easter—The Effects of the Discourse of Jesus .. 168
Second Sunday after Easter—The Arrival at Emmaus 169

page

Monday in Third Week after Easter—The Divine Guest 170
Tuesday in Third Week after Easter—The Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles .. 171
Wednesday in Third Week after Easter—The First Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles 172
Thursday in Third Week after Easter—The Words of Jesus to His Apostles .. 173
Friday in Third Week after Easter—Jesus shows His Sacred Hands and Feet 174
Saturday in Third Week after Easter—The Mission of the Apostles 175
Third Sunday after Easter—The Powers bestowed on the Apostles 176
Monday in Fourth Week after Easter—The Second Appearance of Jesus to the assembled Apostles 177
Tuesday in Fourth Week after Easter—St. Thomas's Profession of Faith .. 178
Wednesday in Fourth Week after Easter—The Fishing of the Apostles 179
Thursday in Fourth Week after Easter—The Appearance of Jesus at the Lake .. 180
Friday in Fourth Week after Easter—St. Peter hastens to Jesus 181
Saturday in Fourth Week after Easter—The Easter Banquet 182
Fourth Sunday after Easter—The Questioning of St. Peter 183
Monday in Fifth Week after Easter—The Charge to St. Peter 184
Tuesday in Fifth Week after Easter—The Appearance of Jesus in Galilee 185
Wednesday in Fifth Week after Easter—The Scene upon the Mount in Galilee .. 186
Thursday in Fifth Week after Faster—The Apostolic Commission 187
Friday in Fifth Week after Easter—The Work intrusted to the Apostles 188

page

Saturday in Fifth Week after Easter—The Promise to the Apostles 189
Fifth Sunday after Easter—The Foundations of the Church 190
Monday in Sixth Week after Easter—The Parting Advice 191
Tuesday in Sixth Week after Easter—The Final Visit 192
Wednesday in Sixth Week after Easter—The Ascension 193

VENI SANCTE SPIRITUS.

MEDITATIONS FROM THE ASCENSION TO THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

Ascension Day—The Return of the Apostles to Jerusalem 197
Friday after the Ascension—The Preparation for Pentecost 198
Saturday after the Ascension—The means employed 199
Sunday after the Ascension—The Gifts sought: I. The Gift of Understanding 200
Monday after the Ascension—II. The Gift of Wisdom 201
Tuesday after the Ascension—III. The Gift of Knowledge 202
Wednesday after the Ascension—IV. The Gift of Counsel 203
Thursday after the Ascension—V. The Gift of Piety 204
Friday after the Octave of the Ascension—VI. The Gift of Fortitude 205
Saturday before Pentecost—VII. The Gift of the Fear of the Lord 206
Whit Sunday—The Descent of the Holy Ghost 207
Whit Monday—The Parted Tongues 208
Whit Tuesday—The Tongues of Fire 209
Wednesday after Pentecost—The Effects of Pentecost: the Gift of Languages . . 210

page

Thursday after Pentecost — The Effects of Pentecost: the Power of Healing . . 211
Friday after Pentecost—The Effects of Pentecost: the Commission to Teach . . 212
Saturday after Pentecost—The Effects of Pentecost: the change in the Apostles themselves 213
Trinity Sunday—The Mystery of the Blessed Trinity 214
Monday after Trinity Sunday—God the Father 215
Tuesday after Trinity Sunday—God the Son . . 216
The Eve of Corpus Christi—God the Holy Ghost 217
The Feast of Corpus Christi—The Triumph of Humility 218
Friday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—The Motive of Jesus in the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament 219
Saturday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—Further Proofs of Jesus' Love for us . . 220
Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—The Return of Love for Love 221
Monday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—Grace increased by the Blessed Sacrament 222
Tuesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—Sin blotted out by the Blessed Sacrament 223
Wednesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi—The Effects of Holy Communion . . 224
Octave of Corpus Christi—The Chief Ends of Holy Communion 225

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS.

MEDITATIONS ON THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD.

FIRST WEEK;

Sunday.—The Baptism of Jesus 229
Monday.—His Fasting 230
Tuesday.—His Temptation 231
Wednesday.—The Lamb of God 232
Thursday.—The First Disciples 233

page

Friday.—Nathanael 234
Saturday.—The Marriage at Cana 235

SECOND WEEK:
Sunday.—The Expulsion of the Traders from the Temple 236
Monday.—The Test of Jesus' Mission 237
Tuesday.—The Visit of Nicodemus 238
Wednesday.—The New Birth 239
Thursday.—The Heavenly Gift 240
Friday.—The Brazen Serpent 241
Saturday.—St. John the Baptist's Testimony to Jesus 242

THIRD WEEK:
Sunday.—The Well of Samaria 243
Monday.—The Living Water 244
Tuesday.—The True and False Worship .. 245
Wednesday.—The Conversion of the Samaritans 246
Thursday.—The Ripening Harvest 247
Friday.—The Healing of the Nobleman's Son 248
Saturday.—The Synagogue at Nazareth .. 249

FOURTH WEEK:
Sunday.—A Prophet in His own Country .. 250
Monday.—The Anger of the Nazarenes .. 251
Tuesday.—The Call of the Fishermen 252
Wednesday.—The Synagogue at Capharnaum 253
Thursday.—The Casting Out of the Devil .. 254
Friday.—The Healing of Peter's Wife's Mother 255
Saturday.—The Work of Jesus at Capharnaum 256

FIFTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Beatitudes: 1. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit 257
Monday.—2. Blessed are the Meek 258
Tuesday.—3. Blessed are they that mourn .. 259
Wednesday.—4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Justice 260
Thursday.—5. Blessed are the Merciful .. 261
Friday.—6. Blessed are the Clean of Heart .. 262
Saturday.—7. Blessed are the Peacemakers .. 263

SIXTH WEEK:

page

Sunday.—8. Blessed are they that suffer Persecution for Justice' sake 264
Monday.—Christians the Salt and the Light of the World 265
Tuesday.—The Fulfilling of the Law 266
Wednesday.—On Alms and Prayers in Public 267
Thursday.—On the Laying up of Treasure .. 268
Friday.—On Purity of Intention 269
Saturday.—On Confidence in God 270

SEVENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—On Rash Judgment 271
Monday.—On the Efficacy of Prayer 272
Tuesday.—On Judging by Results 273
Wednesday.—The House upon the Rock .. 274
Thursday.—The Miraculous Draught of Fishes 275
Friday.—The Healing of the Leper 276
Saturday.—The Healing of the Paralytic .. 277

EIGHTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Vocation of St. Matthew .. 278
Monday.—The Feast in Matthew's House .. 279
Tuesday.—The Miracle at the Probatic Pool .. 280
Wednesday.—The Spirit and the Letter .. 281
Thursday.—The Corn-plucking on the Sabbath 282
Friday.—The Jews rebuked 283
Saturday.—Our Lord retires before His Enemies 284

NINTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Enrolment of the Apostles .. 285
Monday.—The Sermon on the Plain 286
Tuesday.—The Centurion's Servant 287
Wednesday.—The Widow of Naim 288
Thursday.—The Visit of St. John's Disciples .. 289
Friday.—Our Lord's witness to John the Baptist 290
Saturday.—The Result of neglected Graces .. 291

TENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Divine Consoler 292
Monday.—The Conversion of St. Mary Magdalen 293
Tuesday.—The Blasphemy of the Pharisees .. 294
Wednesday.—The Sin against the Holy Ghost 295

page

Thursday.—Idle Words 296
Friday.—True Relationship to Christ 297
Saturday.—The Sower and the Seed 298

ELEVENTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Roadside and Stony Ground .. 299
Monday.—The Thorny Ground 300
Tuesday.—The Good Ground 301
Wednesday.—The Parable of the Cockle .. 302
Thursday.—The Seed cast into the Ground .. 303
Friday.—The Parable of the Mustard-seed .. 304
Saturday.—The Treasure hid in the Field .. 305

TWELFTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Pearl of Great Price 306
Monday.—The Parable of the Leaven 307
Tuesday.—The Stilling of the Tempest .. 308
Wednesday.—The Legion of Devils cast out .. 309
Thursday.—The Old and the New 310
Friday.—The Healing of the Woman with an Issue of Blood 311
Saturday.—The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus 312

THIRTEENTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The sending out of the Apostles to preach 313
Monday.—The Instructions for the Journey .. 314
Tuesday.—Our Lord's care of His Servants .. 315
Wednesday.—The Warfare of the Gospel .. 316
Thursday.—The Recompense of Charity .. 317
Friday.—The Death of St. John the Baptist .. 318
Saturday.—The Return of the Apostles .. 319

FOURTEENTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Feeding of the Five Thousand 320
Monday.—The Gathering up of the Fragments 321
Tuesday.—Jesus appears walking upon the Lake 322
Wednesday.—St. Peter walks upon the Water 323
Thursday.—The Meat that perisheth 324
Friday.—The Bread from Heaven 325
Saturday.—The Saving Will of God 326

FIFTEENTH WEEK:

	page
Sunday.—The Murmuring of the Jews ..	327
Monday.—The Question of Unbelief	328
Tuesday.—Backsliding Disciples	329
Wednesday.—The Unwashed Hands	330
Thursday.—The Growth of Corrupt Traditions	331
Friday.—Evil Thoughts	332
Saturday.—The Sinfulness of Evil Thoughts	333

SIXTEENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Syrophœnician Woman ..	334
Monday.—The Deaf and Dumb Man healed ..	335
Tuesday.—The Sign from Heaven	336
Wednesday.—The Leaven of the Pharisees ..	337
Thursday.—The Blind Man at Bethsaida ..	338
Friday.—The Confession of St. Peter	339
Saturday.—The Promise to St. Peter	340

SEVENTEENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Approaching Passion	341
Monday.—The Doctrine of the Cross	342
Tuesday.—Loss and Gain	343
Wednesday.—The Transfiguration	344
Thursday.—The Healing of the Boy who was possessed	345
Friday.—The Tribute-money	346
Saturday.—The Dispute among the Apostles ..	347

EIGHTEENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—On Scandal	348
Monday.—On Fraternal Charity	349
Tuesday.—The Sacrament of Matrimony ..	350
Wednesday.—The Feast of Tabernacles ..	351
Thursday.—Our Lord in the Temple	352
Friday.—The Woman taken in Adultery ..	353
Saturday.—The Man born Blind	354

NINETEENTH WEEK:

Sunday.—The Good Shepherd	355
Monday.—The Spirit of the Gospel	356
Tuesday.—Some Conditions of following Christ	357
Wednesday.—The Mission of the Seventy ..	358

page

Thursday.—The Good Samaritan 359
Friday.—Martha and Mary 360
Saturday.—How to Pray 361

TWENTIETH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Divided House 362
Monday.—The Divine Maternity 363
Tuesday.—The Rich Fool 364
Wednesday.—Watch! 365
Thursday.—The Unfruitful Fig-tree 366
Friday.—The Narrow Gate 367
Saturday.—On Self-Exaltation 368

TWENTY-FIRST WEEK:
Sunday.—The Great Supper 369
Monday.—The Lost Sheep 370
Tuesday.—The Lost Groat 371
Wednesday.—The Prodigal Son: his Departure 372
Thursday.— ,, his Repentance 373
Friday.— ,, his Return .. 374
Saturday.—The Unjust Steward 375

TWENTY-SECOND WEEK:
Sunday.—On the Use of Riches 376
Monday.—The Rich Glutton 377
Tuesday.—The Raising of Lazarus 378
Wednesday.—The Assembly of the Pharisees .. 379
Thursday.—The Ten Lepers 380
Friday.—The Unjust Judge 381
Saturday.—The Pharisee and the Publican .. 382

TWENTY-THIRD WEEK:
Sunday.—The Necessity of Humility 383
Monday.—The Rich Young Man 384
Tuesday.—The Evangelical Counsels 385
Wednesday.—Coming Troubles 386
Thursday.—The Signs of His Approach .. 387
Friday.—The Suddenness of His Coming .. 388
Saturday.—The Labourers in the Vineyard .. 389

TWENTY-FOURTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Petition of the Sons of Zebedee 390
Monday.—The Blind Men of Jericho 391

page

Tuesday.—The Conversion of Zaccheus .. 392
Wednesday.—The Lord and his Servants .. 393
Thursday.—The Procession of Palms 394
Friday.—Christ weeps over Jerusalem .. 395
Saturday.—On Death to the World 396

TWENTY-FIFTH WEEK:
Sunday.—The Barren Fig-tree 397
Monday.—On Confidence in Prayer 398
Tuesday.—Our Lord's Authority to Teach .. 399
Wednesday.—The Disobedient Sons 400
Thursday.—The Question of the Sadducees .. 401
Friday.—The Vineyard and the Husbandmen 402
Saturday.—The Wedding of the King's Son .. 403

TWENTY-SIXTH WEEK:
Sunday.—Cæsar and God 404
Monday.—The Widow's Mite 405
Tuesday.—The Great Commandment 406
Wednesday.—"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees" 407
Thursday.—The Parable of the Ten Virgins .. 408
Friday.—The Parable of the Talents 409
Saturday.—The Final Judgment 410

THE APPROACH OF THE KING.

MEDITATIONS FOR ADVENT.

1.—What Advent is.

1. Advent is the season when we are taught to look forward both to the first coming of our Lord into the world at Christmas time, and also to His second coming at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. His first coming was to seek and to save that which was lost. His second coming will be to gather His elect into the celestial paradise, and to trample all His enemies under His feet. Shall I on that day be regarded by Him as a friend or as an enemy? Is my present life one of devotion to Him and union with Him, or one of selfishness, pride, impatience of the yoke of Christ?

2. Of all the miracles in the world never was there one to be compared to His coming on earth in the form of a man. It was a miracle so entirely above and beyond our reason, that unless we knew it by faith to be a fact, we should be inclined to pronounce it impossible. That the Infinite God should take the form of a creature! that the Eternal Word should be clad in a body formed of the dust of the earth! that He should of His own accord leave the highest Heaven for a life of suffering and death of agony! Nothing but the power of God could work such a wonder as this.

3. Yet we know that it is a fact. "For us men and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven." He yearned over us with a Divine love. Willingly, joyfully, almost eagerly He stripped Himself of all His glory. "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death." Who after this can refuse to believe that He loved us and still loves us fondly, tenderly? Who can refuse to love Him in return, and to show this love by a loyal obedience to all that He asks of us?

2.—The Divine Decree.

1. What brought Christ down from Heaven? It was man's sin. From all eternity the Blessed Trinity, looking forward to the fall of man, had decreed that the Eternal Word should clothe Himself with human flesh, and should be born into the world in order to repair the evil that man had wrought. Thus God in His mercy provides a remedy for all the sins and follies of men even before they are committed. We do the harm, and God undoes it. Has He not often thus averted from me the consequences due to my evil deeds?

2. In what garb was the Son of God to clothe Himself when He became Man? In one that should give us some idea of the evil He came to undo. He, the Eternal Son, coequal with the Father, took the form of a servant, was born of a despised race, of humble parents, in poverty, and humility, and contempt. All this should impress on us how sin has deserved all these and every other evil imaginable beside. If these were the results of sin on the spotless Lamb of God, what must they be on sinful, feeble man?

3. The Divine decree did not stop at this first coming of the Son of God. There is to be a second Advent, but one in which He will appear in human form indeed, yet now no longer in lowliness and humiliation, but clothed with all the brightness and glory which His Divine Nature can impart to His Sacred Humanity. In this second coming He is to come and receive the reward that He has earned for His human nature, and for all those who had faithfully served Him. He is to come and reign. He is to crush all His enemies under His feet. Look forward to that glorious day, and pray that you may share the glory of the Son of God.

3.—The Announcement of His Coming.

1. For a short time after their creation our first parents lived in perfect peace and happiness in the Garden of Eden. If they had continued obedient to the authority of their Creator during their whole time of probation, there would have been no need for the advent of the Son of God as their Redeemer from sin, for sin there would have been none. It was their deliberate rebellion that was the occasion that determined the visit of the Word to this world of ours. No wonder that the Church sings : *O felix culpa!* O happy transgression, which earned a Redeemer such as this! Admire God's wonderful Providence in thus bringing good out of evil, and advantage to man for his very sin.

2. The promise made was couched in words that gave no immediate prospect of the crushing of the serpent's head and the destruction of His power. It left the curse of sin upon the earth and its inhabitants and announced the sorrows that would accompany them through their time of sojourn here. That law still holds. Christ came to abolish sin, but not its temporal consequences. He who sins shall suffer, is a law which Christ fulfilled and in no way destroyed.

3. Yet the promise of a Redeemer rekindled the light of hope in the souls of Adam and Eve. They and all their children were ever looking and praying for His coming. God's intention was to keep them in expectancy. So too with His second coming. There has always been a tradition of expectation. "Blessed is the man whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." Hence learn to watch and pray, Come quickly, O Lord Jesus!

4.—The Long Darkness.

1. The light extinguished at the Fall was rekindled in the hearts of our first parents when the promise was given them of a Redeemer who should undo the fatal mischief that had been done. But in their children Adam and Eve had to lament the fatal effects of that deadly evil that they had introduced into the world. As generation followed generation, thicker and thicker grew the darkness, farther and farther did men wander away from the light, that gave to each the power of guiding his feet aright from earth to Heaven. Thus it is that each ill deed goes on bearing its deadly fruit, often long after the doer is dead and gone.

2. Yet every man had light and grace sufficient, and more than sufficient, to enable him to walk in the ways of God, and to find his way to the Kingdom of Heaven. But none save a very few availed themselves of it. "They loved darkness more than light." The world gradually lost all regard for virtue or for God. How grateful should I be to God that I live in happier days.

3. If I had lived then, what should I have been? Even with all my countless graces and advantages, what a poor specimen I am of one made by God, for God, and in the image of God. In heathen days should I not have been among the most depraved? Should I not have recklessly indulged my own inclinations, irrespective of the voice of God warning and reproaching me? What chance should I have had of saving my soul in those days of dark corruption and depravity?

5.—Transient Gleams.

1. From time to time there broke through the thick darkness of heathendom a gleam of light that seemed to be a harbinger of the coming day. Some sage or poet sang of a golden age that soon would be at hand. But the flash of light soon disappeared, and only left the darkness even darker than before. So in the life of those who have hardened themselves against God there are sometimes moments when the devil seems to have forsaken his prey, and there seems a hope of better things. But if Jesus' coming is still far away, the improvement soon passes, and the evil seems to have even a more complete mastery than ever before.

2. There is something very beautiful in the sentiments of the old Greek and Roman poets. Their minstrelsy rings sweetly in our ears. Their poems proclaim them men of the highest genius. But they have no power to effect a change of heart, such as is wrought by the inspired words of some great saint or servant of God. God must speak through man's voice, if it is to avail to turn others to God. Do I pray God thus to rule and direct my words that they may do His work?

3. So, too, many of the deeds of the heroes of antiquity appear worthy of the holy ones of God. Some may have been done from a supernatural motive, and may even have merited eternal life. But no act, however noble in the natural order, is of any value in the sight of God, unless it be done with some sort of conscious desire to please and serve Him. Do my ordinary actions possess this necessary characteristic?

6.—The Golden Thread.

1. All through the long ages that elapsed from the promise to the coming of the Redeemer, a golden thread of light from Heaven ran athwart their darkness. In the chosen people of Israel there ever prevailed a strong conviction of the coming of a Saviour, who was to deliver His people from all sin and evil. It was handed down from generation to generation, and was again and again renewed by the inspired declarations of the Prophets of Israel. Thus God in His mercy never leaves Himself without a witness to reveal to men of good-will the message of hope.

2. So through all the centuries that have passed since the coming of our Lord, the Catholic Church has been the golden thread of light amid the darkness of heresy and heathendom. What a bright and glorious thread! What a contrast to all around! How it has, through God's mercy, enlightened my life! How can I ever thank God sufficiently that, led by its Divine light, I am travelling on in peace and safety to the Heavenly Jerusalem!

3. So too there runs through the life of all those who are to attain at last to the eternal happiness of Heaven a golden thread which never wholly disappears, even though their steps may wander far from the right path. Sometimes it is kindness to the poor; sometimes devotion to the holy souls; very often it is a reverence to the Holy Mother of God that thus runs through the whole of life. In my life God has interwoven some such thread. Do I follow it up with grateful perseverance?

7.—The Causes of Delay.

1. If the wickedness of the world in heathen times was so great, how was it that the coming of the Redeemer was so long delayed? To this question we can only give one answer with absolute certainty, that it was so decreed by Almighty God in His infinite wisdom. We cannot hope in this life to comprehend the mysteries of the Providence of the Most High. We can only humbly bow our heads and say that the Redeemer came when God so willed, and that what God wills is necessarily the best.

2. Yet we can at least form some kind of conjecture as to the causes of delay. God works by natural means. In order that the religion of Jesus should spread all over the world by the ordinary working of the laws that govern the affairs of men, it was convenient that the world should be subject to one central power. This was never the case until, at the time of Christ's Nativity, the Roman Empire was mistress of the world. Thus God prepares the way for His designs of mercy, and arranges the world's events according to His will, yet without forcing the wills of men.

3. There was another reason for the long delay. It was to teach us that God does nothing hurriedly. He always waits before putting into execution His decrees. In this He wishes us to imitate Him. The Eternal Wisdom of the Most High needs no time for deliberation. His works are not gradually perfected, or improved on second thoughts. But ours are, and the slow action of the Providence of God should impress upon us the importance of waiting before we act, and considering and reconsidering all our plans.

8.—The Approaching Day.

1. When the sun is soon to appear above the horizon, the morning star, shining with a light derived indeed from him, but nevertheless shining bright and clear even before his coming, gives the signal of his approach. So the Holy Mother of God, dawning upon the world with a grace and beauty which was the gift of her Divine Son, anticipated His Incarnation and made the world more beautiful in God's sight than it had ever been before. Mary was more precious to God than all the rest of men, and this quite independently of her Divine Maternity. Consider why this was, and learn a lesson for yourself.

2. The morning star is still clearly seen when all other stars have been extinguished by the light of the coming day. Mary has a brilliancy so great that the brightness of all the other saints fades into nothing in comparison with hers. If this was the case even in comparison with the glory of St. John Baptist, St. Joseph, Abraham the Patriarch, the friend of God, Job, the model of patience, Daniel, the beloved of God, what must her glory be! Thank God for having created one child of Adam worthy of Himself.

3. Mary's consummate beauty is the consequence of there being in her nothing of her own. All was God's; no admixture of self in her motives, in her aims, in her joys and sorrows, her love and hatred. Her affections were simply a reflection of what God loved and hated; like God she loved all things except sin, and those who were the declared and eternal enemies of God. She desired nothing for herself except that she might see God's holy will fulfilled in all. Is this the account that you can give of yourself? Only if this is so are you a worthy child of Mary.

9.—The Fulfilment of the Decree.

1. The promised coming of the Redeemer had indeed been long delayed. Patriarch had succeeded Patriarch, and died without having the privilege of seeing that long-expected day. The long line of the Prophets had passed away, but their desire after the Messias had not been satisfied. God always keeps His servants waiting for His best gifts, and therefore it was but fitting that they should wait for thousands of years before receiving this Gift of gifts, this Gift in which He gave them Himself.

2. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity had also been waiting for one whose immaculate purity should make her fit, as far as any child of Adam could be fit, to be His Mother. There had been many holy women among the daughters of Abraham, but none without sin, and therefore none in whose womb the Son of God could find repose. If Christ thus could not come to dwell with one who was stained with sin, what must be the purity He requires now of those whose Guest He becomes in Holy Communion? O Jesus, forgive me all my careless receptions of Thee; my want of careful preparation, my faults innumerable!

3. Christ Himself had prepared a resting-place for Himself in Mary's sacred breast. As we read in Holy Scripture: The Most High has sanctified a tabernacle for Himself. So now, if I am to be fit to receive Him, He must prepare my heart Do I think of this during my preparation for Communion, and pray Him to cleanse me from every stain in His most Precious Blood, to beautify with many graces the tabernacle where He is to abide?

10.—The Forerunner of the King.

1. St. John Baptist was the chosen messenger to proclaim the coming of the King of kings. No other herald had so important an office. He had to prepare the hearts of men for the coming of the Messias. It was this that constituted him the greatest of those who were born of women. If to proclaim the coming of Christ in the flesh was so solemn and responsible an office, what must be the dignity and responsibility of the priests of God, who are sent to announce His second coming in glory?

2. How did St. John prepare for his work? By a life of seclusion and penance. From childhood he lived alone in the desert, his bed the hard ground, his meat locusts and wild honey, his dress a camel's skin. Our Lord contrasts him with those who wear soft raiment. No one who lives a life of luxury will ever be an efficient messenger of God. A priest above all must avoid a life of ease and self-indulgence, if he wishes to win souls for Christ.

3. The secret of St. John's success was thus the result of practising what he preached. He practised much more than he preached, for he enjoined upon his hearers the simple performance of ordinary duties while he led a life of continual penance and self-denial. If our words are to carry any weight we must not preach without practising. The parent or superior who has the training of the young, will never train them up to virtue unless he himself is a man of virtue. No one can reach the hearts of others unless he first carries out the lessons he teachers others. Do I do this?

II.—The Forerunner's Message.

1. The refrain of St. John's teaching was a very simple and constant one. "Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It seems strange advice. The coming of the King of Heaven might be a reason for joy on the part of those who looked for Him, and of dread on the part of His enemies. But why for doing penance? Yet the teaching of St. John is true now, as it was at the time His words were first spoken. Penance is the means of preparation for the advent of our King. This explains the Saint's love of penance. What penance do I practise with this object?

2. Yet after all it is the natural and most suitable means of preparation. It helps us to bring into subjection that lower nature, which rebels against the sovereignty of our King. It detaches us from finding our satisfaction in earthly things. It is in itself an act of obedience to our King. It renders us humble, and teaches us to put our necks under the yoke. It saves us from being separated from the Kingdom we are to share by the long prison of Purgatory. Learn from all this to love penance.

3. Penance is a necessary preparation for receiving our King when He comes to us in humble form in Holy Communion. This is why Confession is the preliminary of that Sacred Feast, and why contrition is necessary. We must purge our souls by prayer and penance and sorrow for sins, if we are to rejoice exceedingly in the Bridegroom's presence, and to hear His voice sweetly whispering in our ears. Do I prepare thus for Holy Communion?

12.—The Forerunner's Office.

1. St. John was something more than a herald. He had to prepare the way for the King, to make the crooked ways straight, and the rough places smooth. His office was that which is entrusted to us all in our own sphere; to try and make the way in which the followers of Christ have to tread straight and easy. What a privilege if we can by our charity and our edifying life make the path of life more easy for those whose lot it is to tread the way of the Cross and to walk over rough or stormy paths. Is this your endeavour in your daily life, or do you place obstacles in the path of others by your bad example, want of charity and consideration, impatience, &c.

2. St. John, as the Herald or Forerunner of Christ, had to proclaim the coming of the King. He himself expresses this by his description of himself as the *voice* of one who cries in the desert; that is, Christ spoke through his mouth. So He speaks through the mouths of all His servants just in proportion to their devotion and singleness of purpose. How poor an echo are my words of the whispers of Christ to the faithful soul. How mixed with the discordant notes of self-will to worldliness!

3. St. John's estimate of himself in comparison with Him whom he announced was that he was not worthy to stoop down and untie the latchet of His sandal. This was the duty of the lowest slaves. It meant that he was unworthy to serve Christ, even in the capacity of a slave, and by doing the work that many slaves would consider beneath them. Am I willing to undertake the humblest and most menial duties in the service of Christ? Do I consider it a privilege to do so?

13.—Hope.

1. Advent is essentially a time of hope. It is not in itself a time of joy except so far as hope of joy to come brings with it a present gladness. It is an exact representation of our life on earth. We are in a place of exile and a valley of tears, but yet our hope amid all the darkness should be lighted up and rendered joyous by the prospect of future joy. The motto of our life is our Lord's farewell words to His disciples: "You indeed shall have sorrow, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." This must be my consolation in all sorrow. I must try and forget my present troubles in the happy thought of the joy to come.

2. Why have we so little hope? Generally because we seek to have our happiness here, and so forfeit the right to it hereafter, or at least forfeit the right to look forward to it with confidence and joy. We cannot eat our cake and keep it. If I seek my satisfaction in money, or comforts, or praise, or applause, or affection of others, I have my reward here and cannot expect to get any reward hereafter. I have no crown of justice to hope for if already I have had the crown of satisfied ambition, or pockets filled with money, or a tickled palate, or the buzzing applause of a crowd.

3 Our hope is also marred by our self-will, which prevents our will from being in complete conformity with the will of God. We are conscious of a sort of barrier between ourselves and Him which sadly interferes with our hope. We have assumed a sort of independence of God which renders it impossible for Him to pour into our hearts that hope which is in exact proportion to our conformity to His will. If I were humble and more resigned in all things, I should be more full of hope.

14.—Rejoice.

1. The time of preparation is a mingled period of penance and of joy. Of penance, by reason of our sins, which have removed us so far away from God; of joy, at the prospect of being brought near to Him once more through Jesus Christ. On mid-Advent, as on mid-Lent Sunday, it is the joyful side of the matter that comes before us. More than this, joy is insisted upon as a duty. It seems strange that the command to rejoice should be necessary. Do not all men love joy, and seek after it unbidden? One thing it shows, that God desires that we should be full of joy. Thank Him for this merciful intention, and try and carry it out.

2. Yet it is not all kinds of joy that is recommended to us. There are many kinds of joy that the Apostle would be far from recommending. To rejoice in the world is but a sorry kind of joy, on account of its transitory character. *Gaudete in Domino*, says the Apostle—"Rejoice in the Lord." This is the only joy that lasts, and the only joy that is really worth the having.

3. What does St. Paul mean by rejoicing in the Lord? He means the joy that is the result of such a love of God, as makes us simply wish that His will should be done in all things, and that feels positive joy in seeing the accomplishment of the Divine will, quite apart from any personal advantage or disadvantage that may accrue to ourselves. This is the secret of true joy, for then what befalls ourselves is a matter of indifference to us. Be it weal or woe, success or failure, we rejoice in it simply because it is what God has ordained for us. This is the meaning of our Lord's words, "Your joy no man taketh from you."

15.—Rejoice always.

1. St. Paul goes beyond the mere command to rejoice, and to rejoice in the Lord; he also bids us to rejoice always. Is this possible? Yes, it is quite possible. If it were not, the Apostle would not have imposed it upon us. It is not easy, because our self-love and our selfishness destroy joy. But the saints, who had driven self-love out of their hearts, found it a pleasant and an easy task to be always joyful. If we desire the same, we must do our best to get rid of this hindrance to our joy.

2. How are we to accomplish this task? It must be a gradual one. It is to be arrived at by many acts of submission to the will of God, and to the will of others when opposed to our own; and the submission must have for its motive, not the intellectual conviction that what we ourselves desire is in itself inferior, but the determination to submit for the sake of submission, and as an act of reverence to God. We must be willing to submit both will and intellect to those set over us, without complaining or questioning their commands. Do I do so?

3. When this painful process is over, and when at length we begin to learn the happiness of giving up our own will to the will of others, we soon begin to receive the reward of our self-conquest. We acquire by degrees an undisturbed calm of soul, and an increasing strength of will, as the fruits of our victory over self, and above all a happy consciousness that we have been learning the lesson of conforming our will to the will of God, in which the happiness of Heaven consists.

16.—The Second Coming of Christ.

1. When the Apostles on Mount Olivet were gazing after their Master, Who had just ascended into Heaven, two Angels stood by them and announced to them that He Who had just vanished from their sight would return in like manner. Our Lord Himself had already declared that He would come again with power and great glory and would sit upon the throne of His glory. At the sound of His approach the dead will rise from their graves to meet Him, and the nations of the world who have not accepted His sway will be filled with unspeakable terror and dismay. What will be the disposition with which I shall rise again to meet Christ? What would they be now if He were to come to-day?

2. The object of His coming will be to judge the living and the dead. All that is now hidden will be made manifest before the world. All the secret thoughts and whispered words, and actions concealed from the eyes of men will then be made manifest. How should I like to have all my base and low motives dragged to light, all my unkind words revealed to those against whom they were spoken, all those actions, of which I cannot myself think without shame, proclaimed so that all may behold them?

3. Our Lord will come, radiant in majesty and glory, to crush His enemies under His feet and reward His faithful soldiers and servants. How great then will be the ignominy and shame of the mighty men of earth, if they have not bowed their neck to the King of kings! How full of joy will be the hearts of all who have humbled themselves before Him! How will they be beautiful beyond compare, and honoured before His holy Angels! Learn now to humble yourself under the yoke of Christ.

17.—The Signs of His Coming.

1. One of the signs of the Second Coming of our Lord being nigh at hand will be that no one will expect it. All the world will be satisfied that things will go on as hitherto for many a century, and they will ask: Where is the promise of His coming? In this too, the life of the individual is often a miniature of the history of the world. Christ comes again to many an unexpecting soul when sudden death, through some accident or unsuspected disease, carries off in a moment the man who thought he had long years to live. "Blessed is he whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching."

2. Another warning of our Lord's approach will be the coming of Antichrist. He will be one whose authority and power will be a counterfeit of that of the Vicar of Christ. His distinguishing marks will be overweening pride, hatred of the Catholic Church, widespread dominion, a spirit of rebellion which will enlist in his service all who revolt against the authority that comes from God. Examine yourself to see if there lurks in you any of this dislike of lawful authority, and pray for the grace of loyalty to men for God's sake.

3. Before our Lord's coming there will be a terrible persecution of the servants of God. In these days, when there is an ever-increasing spirit of tolerance, it is hard to understand this. But under the spirit of what is called religious liberalism lurks a deadly hatred of the Church of Christ. It breaks out from time to time, as in the French Commune. It slumbers now, but will blaze up again some day. Pray for grace to withstand all the assaults of the persecutor.

18.—The Uncertainty of His Coming.

1. Ever since our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, His servants have watched for His return, crying out: Come, O Lord Jesus, come quickly! In the days of the Apostles, in the early ages of the Church, in mediæval times, men believed that His coming was close at hand. In these later days, it is true, the expectancy is not so immediate as it once was; but the very fact that we think the world has still centuries to run, may be an indication that the end is not far away. Can I from my heart offer the prayer that His coming may not be long delayed?

2. Men sometimes tell us that when six thousand years have passed, the world will have run its course, and Christ will return to judge the living and the dead. It may be so; but rash indeed is he who ventures thus to fix the time, for it is our Lord Himself who tells us: "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, nor the angels of God, but the Father only." One of the essential characteristics of that day will be its suddenness. Hence learn the importance of being always ready, and then you will be always safe.

3. We may not live till the Second Coming of Christ surprises the world; but we shall live until the day which is the call for us to judgment. That day is not far off; it may be very near, and the chance is that it will either come unexpectedly, or else will be preceded by a time which will be but a poor time for preparation. I must be prepared now, I must always be prepared for the moment when I hear the voice of God summoning me, and then the sooner that time comes the better for me.

19.—The Preparation for His Approach.

Who is there who does not desire to meet Jesus Christ, when He comes again, with joy and not with trembling? To ensure this three things are necessary.

1. We must have friends amongst those who will come again with Him. Just as few die a happy death, unless they have some advocates in Heaven, so few indeed will meet our Lord with joy, unless they have some who will welcome them as having befriended them for Christ's sake. Unless we have been men of supernatural charity, we shall stand defenceless on that day. Alas! how faint and feeble my charity has been; how little I have done to procure friends who will plead for me on that day.

2. We must also have had the thought of Jesus often present to our minds in life, if His coming to be a joyful one to us. He must be no stranger to us. He must have been our guide, our friend, our Master, our companion. We must have walked with God on earth, if we are to walk with Him in the celestial paradise. The more familiar has been our friendship with Him, the greater will be our happiness in meeting Him again.

3. We must also have carried our cross willingly after Him on earth, if we are to meet Him with a well-grounded confidence of a great reward in the kingdom which He has won for His elect. O how overflowing will be the delight of those who have lived mortified and self-denying lives for His sake! What a trifle will all their sufferings then appear in comparison with their abounding joy when the Archangel's trumpet sounds!

20.—The Dangers of the Careless Soul.

1. .There is in human nature a fatal tendency to procrastinate, especially when that which we know we ought to do is something to which we are naturally disinclined. All men are naturally disinclined to do violence to themselves, and force their pride and self-will to yield before the sway of Christ, to put on His yoke and carry His Cross. Hence men put off and make excuses to themselves and fancy that what is difficult to them to-day will be easy to them to-morrow! O fatal mistake! Each day that we postpone the task of submission it becomes more difficult, more distasteful. Why then do I not hasten to submit myself entirely to Christ?

2. From day to day the careless soul thus goes on putting off, crying: To-morrow I will amend my ways; and when to-morrow comes, it still cries: To-morrow. How fatal is this folly! To-morrow may never come, or if it comes, you may have forfeited the grace. "To-day, if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

3. This postponement is always accompanied by some deliberate disobedience to the commands or to the holy inspirations of the Spirit of God. Thus the careless soul becomes more engrossed in earthly things and more and more disinclined to make the necessary effort. Thus it is that so many will be surprised by the coming of their Judge at the moment when they least expect Him, and are quite unprepared to meet Him. O Jesus, save me at any cost from the deadly state of the careless soul!

21.—O Sapientia.

Before the feast of Christmas, the coming Saviour is welcomed in seven antiphons, which greet Him under various titles, and entreat Him to come quickly to enlighten and deliver His people.

"O Wisdom, Who camest forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching in Thy strength from end to end, and sweetly disposing all things, come and teach us the way of prudence."

1. The first title given to Jesus is that of Wisdom. He was the Eternal Wisdom of God, and the source of all wisdom to men from one end of time to the other. With Him all wisdom; without Him no wisdom. Yet I have sometimes fancied myself wise when I was acting quite apart from Him, and perhaps His wishes or commands. What utter folly!

2. It is the Eternal Word that disposes all things sweetly. Everything that happens in Heaven or earth is arranged by Him, and is arranged not unkindly, or harshly, or bitterly, but sweetly. Why then do I regret what I ought to know He has arranged sweetly, *i.e.*, with designs of love for me if I take it in the right spirit?

3. Come and teach us the way of prudence. This is our first petition to Him who is to come. If only He imparts prudence, all must be well. Prudence chooses the right end, viz., the glory of God, and the right means to the end, viz., what we know God asks of us now, and in our present circumstances. Teach me, O Jesus, that lesson of prudence which will guide me safe to the Kingdom of Heaven.

22.—O Adonai.

"O Lord, and Leader of the house of Israel, Who didst appear to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush, and didst give to him the law on Mount Sinai, come to redeem us with Thy stretched-out arm."

1. The Saviour for whom we look is also our Lord (Adonai), the Leader and Chief to whom we have sworn fealty. We speak of Him continually under the familiar name of our Lord, and each time we do so we reassert our acknowledgment of the obligation to follow where He leads, and to be subject to Him in all things. O happy followers of such a Leader! If we tread in His footsteps, and obey His voice, He will set our feet in green pastures, and lead us to the fountains of the water of life.

2. The flame of fire in the burning bush was a figure of Jesus in Mary's sacred womb. Holy indeed was the place where God was present, and whence He promised to His people their deliverance from Egypt. So He still speaks as if concealed in Mary's womb, and reminds us that He has made her holy with a holiness second only to His own; and when we draw nigh to her, we hear His voice announcing to us that He has heard our prayers offered through her, and will soon come to deliver us from our enemies.

3. What shall be our prayer to Him when He inspires us to make our request with boldness at the throne of grace? Come to redeem us with Thy stretched-out arm. Come to deliver us from the effects of our past sins. Come to deliver us from the attachment to some sin that still lurks within us. Come to deliver us from all our countless negligences and imperfections. Come with Thine arm stretched out to ward us from the foe, O Lord and Lover of our souls.

23.—O Radix Jesse.

"O Root of Jesse, Who standest for a sign to the nations, before whom kings shall shut their mouth, of whom the Gentiles shall entreat mercy; come to set us free, and no longer delay."

1. The King who is to come is of the root of Jesse, since He is of David's royal line. He is the true David, who laid low the spiritual Goliath, the prince of darkness, who in pagan times defied the power of the living God. He is above all the Man after God's own heart, in that the one motive of His Heart was to carry out His Father's will. If this is the motive power of my life, then I too am of the root of Jesse, and in spite of failings, am a man after God's own heart, just in proportion as this motive is ever present to me.

2. Jesus is a sign to the nations; a sign of contradiction to His enemies, but before whom the most powerful will have to shut their mouth in humble subjection; a sign to His friends, the men of good-will in every clime and country, who will be drawn to Him to offer their joyful homage at His feet, entreating of Him that mercy which He is more ready to grant than they to ask. To me He is a sign, either fondly loved, or neglected and treated as of no account.

3. O Root of Jesse, O King and Saviour, come and set us free; free from all that displeases Thee, free from the snares that entangle our feet, free from our perverse attachment to our own will, free from the power of the devil, free from our slowness in obeying Thy commands and holy inspirations, free from all that hinders us in Thy service; come and say the word, and we shall be delivered.

24.—O Clavis David.

"O Key of David, and sceptre of the house of Israel; Who openest and no man shutteth, and shuttest and no man openeth; come and deliver from the prison-house the captive who sits in darkness and in the shadow of death."

1. The key and the sceptre are the symbol of supreme authority; they indicate the sway that the Saviour is to hold over His faithful people, and the right which He alone possesses of opening the gate of Heaven to the children of men, and of extending to them the golden sceptre of His mercy and forgiving love. To me, O Key of David, unworthy though I am, open in Thy mercy the door of Heaven; stretch out to me, all undeserving the sceptre of Thy favour and Thy love.

2. Thou shuttest, O Lord, and no man opens. O shut not upon me the door which will admit me to draw nigh to Thee. Shut not upon me the door of Thy mercy and grace. Shut not the door which leads me into the inner sanctuary of Thy love. Shut not the door of that fold wherein Thy favourite children dwell in peace and happiness. Shut not, above all, the door of Paradise at my last hour.

3. Come then, O Lord, and open to me now the door of my captivity. I am a captive to my own self-will; a captive to my want of charity; a captive to my vanity and love of display; a captive to my self-indulgence and dislike of mortification; a captive to a thousand faults of which I am scarcely conscious. Come, O Lord, and set the captive free. I am weak, and cannot break my chains unless I receive from Thee the necessary strength; come, O Lord Jesus, come quickly.

25.—O Oriens.

"O Orient, splendour of eternal light and Sun of Justice; come and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

1. The night of Pagan times was long and dark, and seemed hopeless. Deeper and deeper the nations were sinking in misery and vice. But at length the Orient, the brightness of the eternal light of Heaven, rose, and scattered the darkness, changing the gloom into a brilliant day. So too to those who have been long shrouded in the dense gloom of sin or sorrow there waits the same Divine light, ready to scatter their darkness in a moment, if only they will draw nigh to Him. He waits for me, ready to brighten my path, to scatter my sins and sorrows, if I will avail myself of His love

2. That rising light is the Sun of Justice, Who shall exercise His justice in delivering the captive, and in recompensing His friends a hundred, nay, a thousandfold, for every little service done to Him. For His justice is virtually identical with His mercy, and rejoices to employ itself in works of pity and of love.

3. Come then, O Orient, O Sun of Justice; shine on those who sit in darkness, on those who are enveloped in the thick mists of heathendom and heresy. Come and enlighten their ignorance, that they may not perish. Come and deliver them from the shadow of death, for they cannot deliver themselves. Pour upon them such a flood of light and grace as may guide their feet into the way of peace.

26.—O Rex Gentium.

"O King of the nations and desired of them, and the corner-stone that makest both one, come and save man whom Thou didst form of dust."

1. Never was there a King who had such a claim to sovereignty as Christ our Lord. He is King by Divine appointment and His own right. He is King by the consentient voice of His subjects, and by the right of conquest. He is King by reason of His having purchased us with His own Blood. What unnumbered claims He has on me, and beside all the rest, does He not deserve to reign supreme by reason of His having won me by His love?

2. Christ was desired by all nations, long before they knew Him Whom they desired. The heathen world felt a craving want which it could not define, but which was the desire for the Saviour Who should free them from the bondage of sin. So now men of good-will outside the Church feel something of the same strange longing. Nothing will satisfy it save submission to their King by union with His mystical body the Church of God. O, how happy am I, whose desires are fulfilled in that I am no alien, but a servant of that King whom to serve is my own desire.

3. Christ is the corner-stone that maketh both one; the King of Peace, whose work it is to unite together those who love Him in the unity of mutual love of one another for His sake. Thus He desires that I should be united to those around me, that there should be no dissension or disunion. Do I in this fulfil the pleasure of my King?

27.—O Emmanuel.

"O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of the nations and their Saviour, come to save us, O Lord our God!"

1. Emmanuel, God with us, is a name that in every way belongs to Christ our Lord. He is with His people in all their needs, ever ready to help and console them. He is with us on every altar, waiting for us to come and pour out before Him our sorrow and our needs. He is with us, above all, in Holy Communion, when He comes to dwell in our heart, and to bring with Him every grace that we need. He is with us in the hour of death, and He will be with us for ever in Heaven.

2. He who thus comes to dwell with us in familiar friendship is our King; He who thus condescends to be our companion is the God who has an absolute right to our obedience. He is our Lawgiver, and the statutes that He enacts for us have but one end and aim and object, to lead His subjects into the ways of happiness and the paths of peace.

3. Come then, O God, our Lord and our Saviour. Come and save us from all the perils of the evil one, and from our own weakness and frailty. Come and save us in the hour of temptation, for Thou alone art our King, and none save Thou shalt rule over us. Come and bring us safe through this valley of tears to Thy Eternal Kingdom, where we shall dwell for ever, O sweet Jesus, in the everlasting delights of Thy blissful company.

28.—Christmas Eve.

1. How did Mary and Joseph spend the first Christmas Eve? St. Joseph spent it in a fruitless attempt to find a lodging for his holy spouse. Vainly he sought for a place in the caravanserai, or inn, where travellers were received. Vainly he went from house to house in Bethlehem. Everywhere he was disappointed. Thus it is that God prepares His saints and chosen ones for some signal blessing. We must not be cast down by the fruitlessness of our efforts. It is a sign that some great grace is close at hand.

2. Mary meantime was patiently waiting. She was simply praying that God's will might be done, whatever suffering it might bring to her. She was offering herself to God, to be used by Him as He should see fit. She was making acts of perfect conformity to the will of God in all things. Blessed are those who wait patiently in such a spirit. God will soon fulfil all the desires of their heart.

3. Yet Mary and Joseph, in spite of the sorrow of the one, and the anxiety of the other, were both of them overflowing with heavenly consolations. How could it be otherwise, when one of them carried Christ in her chaste womb, and the other was more dear to God than any other of the sons of men, for he was Mary's chosen spouse, and he knew that before another day was past she was to bring forth into the world the Son of God. Our happiness, like that of Joseph and Mary, does not depend upon our external circumstances, but on the love that we bear to God in our hearts.

THE HOLY INFANCY.

MEDITATIONS FROM CHRISTMAS TO THE FEAST OF OUR LADY'S ESPOUSALS.

1.—The Nativity.

1. Four thousand years had passed since God promised to our first parents that a Redeemer should come to free the world from the curse that had fallen upon it when Adam was disobedient to the Divine command. Prophets and kings had desired to see the day when that promise should be fulfilled, but had not seen it. The whole world had long expected the day of Redemption. God always is slow in His best gifts. Hence learn to be patient. He will surely come and bless you in His own good time.

2. All the world was at peace at the moment when Christ was born. The angry passions of men were hushed, as if in compliment to the Prince of Peace. He never comes where strife and confusion prevail. If I desire that He should come into my heart to-day, I must resolve to keep under my evil passions, and the self-will that dares to do battle against the will of God.

3. But when the gift came at last, it was worthy of the Divine generosity. It was a gift of infinite value, given to all and each of the sons of men. It was a gift in which God gave Himself to be wholly ours. That little Infant in the cradle, before whom I kneel to-day, is the Omnipotent God, loving me with an immeasurable love, my King, my Lord, my Redeemer, my best Friend, the Divine lover of my soul. O would that I loved Him more!

2.—The New-born Child.

In the cradle before us lies the new-born Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger. Let us contemplate Him for a few moments and see what lessons He teaches us.

1. He teaches us the unspeakable force of Divine Charity. How was it possible for the Eternal Word, the coequal Son of God, to leave the bosom of His Father, to clothe Himself with the flesh of sinful man? It seems an almost extravagant act of love, one unworthy of the dignity of God. Yet love puts everything aside except the burning desire to promote the welfare of the loved. The Son of God forgot all else in His Divine compassion for us. How dearly He must love us! How great should be our confidence in His love!

2. He teaches us never to judge by appearances. If we had been told that God had come to dwell on earth, would not the stable of Bethlehem have been the last place where we should have sought Him? In many a humble cottage there may still be found saints more dear to God than even those who have a world-wide repute for their holiness and virtue!

3. He teaches us the true dignity of self-abasement. God could not do anything unworthy of Himself when clad in human flesh. It therefore was no disparagement to the Divine honour that He should thus infinitely condescend. Nay, it proved that the greatest possible likeness to God is attained by the most complete humiliation of self. How little I have learnt to practise this lesson!

3.—The Holy Mother.

By the side of the manger where the Infant lies, His Mother is watching. Who is she?

1. A poor and humble maiden, but nevertheless the Mother of God. The Mother of God! How can this be? How can the Eternal, Infinite God have a human Mother? Yet so it is; Mary has a privilege which raises her immeasurably above the highest of the Seraphim. It makes her more perfect in her likeness to God than is possible to any other creature. If then we honour the Saints and Angels, how much more should we honour God's own Mother!

2. Yet Mary has a still greater claim to our homage, a more fruitful source of blessedness even than the Divine Maternity. Her unswerving obedience to the inspirations of God is declared by our Lord Himself to be a still higher privilege—"Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." If only we realized the blessedness of unswerving obedience, how different our lots would be!

3. What are Mary's thoughts, as she sits watching there? She has no thought save of God. She is absorbed in Him. The hours pass like minutes, they are a sort of anticipation of Paradise. She sees her God face to face, and though His glory is veiled under the robe of flesh, yet Mary can pierce through it as none else ever could, and can bask in the Divinity which it conceals. O God, help me to realize now Thy presence, when Thou art veiled under the Sacramental species.

4.—The Foster-Father.

At no great distance from the Mother of God stands His holy foster-father St. Joseph, the third person of that earthly Trinity. What can we learn from him?

1. He is the true husband of Mary, united to her by a closer bond than any on earth save that which exists between the Mother and the Son. He is moreover the true earthly father of Jesus, in everything except the fact of carnal generation. He has committed to him the care of God Himself, and of her who is dearer to God than all the world beside. He is therefore, next to Mary, of all mankind the most privileged and the most exalted. How then can we honour him enough?

2. When God gives to any one an office, He gives him the virtues and the qualities which are required for its perfect exercise. What then must have been the virtues of St. Joseph? He must have had every virtue, not only in an eminent degree, but in a degree to which none other of the sons of men ever attained. Prudence, justice, humility, charity, in all he was far above all else. I therefore may ask of him every grace that I need.

3. Above all, St. Joseph was eminent for his unspotted purity. Many theologians assert that he was sanctified in his mother's womb. None save Mary was ever so pure as he. This it was that qualified him for his intimate union with Jesus and Mary. If I desire to be united to them, I must be pure of heart. **St. Joseph, obtain for me this grace of purity!**

5.—The Little Maid.

There is a tradition which asserts that besides Joseph and Mary there was present in the stable at Bethlehem a little maid, who had accompanied them from Nazareth, and who ministered to our Lady and the new-born Child.

1. Consider the happiness of this little servant, who was privileged to wait upon the holy Mother of God. If to wait upon a Queen is considered an honour worthy of maidens of the highest birth, how much more to wait upon the Queen of Heaven! Angels must have envied her the task, and longed to be allowed to share in it. I too can wait upon Mary, by walking in processions in her honour, by kneeling before her statue, by offering her flowers or votive candles; or if this is out of my power, by declaring to her my loyalty and desire to serve her.

2. Consider this maiden had a still greater privilege. She ministered to God Himself as He lay in the manger. She had the singular honour of being the first after His Mother and St. Joseph to wait upon the King of kings; nay, to carry Him in her arms, and to look upon the Face of God; to fold Him to her bosom. How pure and holy she must have been! How pure and holy I ought to be, who in Holy Communion am brought into still closer contact with the Sacred Body of Christ!

3. Consider how you would have acted had you been that little servant. Imagine yourself ministering to the Infant Jesus. How unworthy of the task, yet how eager to fulfil it well, to anticipate the wishes of Mary! Do I thus minister to Him in His brethren?

6.—The Angels' Song.

On the night of the Nativity a countless multitude of the heavenly host were singing the praises of the new-born King. Let us listen to them.

1. They are singing *Gloria in excelsis Deo*—"Glory to God in the highest!" It is the first song they have sung on earth since the Fall. It is sung on the occasion of the infinite humiliation of the Son of God. Yet they sing, "Glory to God in the highest!" It must therefore be a source of unspeakable glory to God that He has taken the form of a servant, that He has humbled Himself to the very dust. If this is such a source of glory to God, my true glory must consist in humbling myself.

2. They are also singing of peace to men. What sort of peace? Not external peace, for Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword; but true peace, internal peace, that tranquillity of soul that nothing can destroy. This is the boon that Christ gives to all who love Him, in proportion to their love.

3. But peace not for all, but for men of good will. Christ indeed brought peace to all, but all did not accept it—only those whose good-will and loyal spirit of submission made them ready to acknowledge Him as their Lord, and whom, therefore, the good-will of God had predestined to the eternal peace and joy of Heaven. God grant that I may be one of these!

7.—The Shepherds' Visit.

The first who came to pay their homage to the new-born King were the shepherds who were watching in the fields of Bethlehem, and to whom an Angel had announced the birth of Christ the Lord. They received this honour because

1. They were poor, and therefore were well suited to gather round the King who came to live in poverty on earth. The Eternal Father chose poverty for His well-beloved Son, and therefore poverty must be better than riches. The poor are to be envied rather than pitied, so long as their poverty is not due to their own sin or folly. How many who have saved their souls in poverty would have lost them, if they had been rich! Hence, if you are poor, do not regret your poverty, but rather rejoice in it.

2. They were simple of heart, untainted by the world's deceits. None but good, simple men would have thus come in the darkness of the night to the stable of Bethlehem, to find their Saviour and their King. God loves simplicity. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome," says our Lord; and He thereby describes the happy lot of those whose one aim is to do their work with simplicity for God alone? Is this my spirit?

3. They were shepherds. The occupation is one which God seems to love. The man after God's own heart was a shepherd. Our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Every Christian is a shepherd, in that some sheep or lambs are committed to his care. Am I a zealous shepherd of the sheep of Christ?

8.—The Circumcision.

1. On the first day of the year we commemorate the first shedding of the Precious Blood for us. Christmas week, as it draws to a close, introduces us to the new-born King in the weakness of the nature that He shared with sinful man. We now learn that He came, not to manifest His power and majesty, but to be made like unto us in all things, as far as it was possible for one who was the Eternal Son of God. We begin to appreciate that He is flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone.

2. To-day He also proclaims that He is come to suffer *for* us. We listen to His first cry of pain, and see the strange spectacle of the first commencement of that life, of which the agony upon the Cross was the final consummation. How shall we ever thank Him as we ought? How great a joy we should consider it, if we have the privilege of suffering some little pain for Him in return!

3. He also declares to us to-day that He is come to suffer *with* us, to take part in all the miseries of humanity, to learn by His own experience all that we have to endure in this valley of tears. This it is which should console us in all our troubles. Christ not only knows them all, but has in His mercy felt them all Himself in His Sacred Humanity.

9.—Mary at the Circumcision.

1. The week succeeding the birth of her Son had been to Mary a week of exquisite joy, one long ecstasy of heavenly delight, with no sorrow to mar the brightness of the sunshine of His presence. But on the octave of His Nativity all was changed. She began to realize the fact that Jesus had come to suffer, that He Who was infinitely dearer to her than the whole world, was to be the Man of Sorrows, and Mary's joy was changed to bitter sorrow. Thus it is for all those who love God. The times when earth seems unable to contain the greatness of their joy are sure to be followed by sorrow and by pain.

2. It seemed but a trifle which thus changed the complexion of Mary's life. The pain that Jesus had to suffer had but a passing smart. Why should she thus grieve over it? It was because it betokened the indignities that He would have to suffer, the character of a victim for sin that He had taken upon Himself. Often a mere trifle destroys the brightness of our life. God uses matters seemingly trivial to teach us our weakness.

3. Yet Mary would not have had it otherwise. She knew it was the will of God, and that was enough for her. Would that I could learn this lesson more perfectly! Then nothing would destroy my peace, as nothing destroyed Mary's.

10.—The Meaning of the Circumcision.

1. It seems strange that the spotless Lamb of God should have been subjected to a rite which is usually supposed to have been the occasion on which Jewish boys were freed from original sin. Was it not derogatory to Jesus, and calculated to produce the false impression that He was not the Son of God, born of a Virgin Mother, but a sinful son of Adam, like those around? Sometimes it is not only lawful, but a duty, to do what is calculated to mislead others, when God enjoins it or some higher motive exists for it.

2. What was this higher motive in the case of the Circumcision of Jesus? It was that He might become like us in all things, sin only excepted; that He might be made sin for us, *i.e.*, might bear all the consequences of sin, and the suffering that is the result of sin. O merciful Saviour, may my heart be ever full of gratitude to Thee for this Thy Divine condescension!

3. Our Lord also was circumcised because He came to fulfil all the Jewish Law, with all its rites and ceremonies. He exalted it by His obedience and exact accomplishment of all its details. So I ought to love and obey every enactment of the Church, every ceremony and every detail of her ritual and discipline.

II.—The Humility of the Circumcision.

1. One of the most difficult things in the world is to submit to anything that lowers us in the opinion of men and tends to give them a false impression respecting us. Our self-love revolts against the wrongful suspicion, and nature is eager to prove its injustice. Our Lord in the Circumcision submitted to a rite which seemed to imply that He was born in sin, in order to teach us, at the very opening of His life, a willingness to be misunderstood and judged guilty of faults we have never committed, and to be credited with natural disadvantages which we do not really possess.

2. We cannot all aim as high as this, or at least we have not yet reached this love of being wrongly judged and despised without cause. But we can learn to recognize how utterly opposed to the spirit of Christ is any attempt to make ourselves out better than we are, and to try and lead others to attribute to us virtues or advantages that are not ours, whether it be generosity, or piety, or learning, or riches, or high birth, or wide influence, or a distinguished position in the world.

3. If we want to test our humility, we cannot have a safer touchstone than this willingness to be underrated or disesteemed without any fault of our own. Happy those who can rejoice to suffer shame without giving cause for it! Am I one of these?

12.—The Name of Jesus.

1. At the Circumcision, Jewish children received their name as other children do at their baptism. Mary's little Son received the name of Jesus or Deliverer, because He was to deliver men from the slavery of sin. This was His appointed office by the Divine command, to put an end to the slavery in which men were held by the devil. He was sent to deliver me from the bondage under which I have long laboured, the bondage to the opinion of men, the bondage to ill-temper, the bondage to passion, the bondage to selfishness, the bondage to self-will, the bondage to riches or comforts. O Jesus, Deliverer of those in bondage, by Thy sacred Circumcision deliver me.

2. Jesus is also our Deliverer from the terrible consequences of sin. Our sins were remitted by the shedding of His Precious Blood. Without the shedding of blood, says St. Paul, there is no remission. What reason I have to dread the consequences due to my sins! Yet Jesus can and will deliver me from it, if I love Him as I ought.

3. Jesus also is the Deliverer of all creation from the curse which came upon the whole earth at the Fall. He has sanctified it by the drops of His Precious Blood that fell upon it. Henceforward it became a new earth, and one day He will cleanse it from all its impurities, and renew it to the heavenly beauty, and make it worthy to be the home of His elect.

13.—The Epiphany.

1. The Sun of Justice that rose on Christmas morn did not shine on the Jews only. The light that shone upon the rejoicing earth was a light that was to enlighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of the people of Israel. The feast of the Epiphany was the declaration of the world-wide dominion of the new-born King. It proclaimed that the kingdoms of this world were to be the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Rejoice with the Infant King in His universal sovereignty, and pray that His Kingdom may speedily be acknowledged by all His subjects.

2. Those who came to visit Jesus on the Epiphany were three kings. They came as the representatives of all earthly monarchies. They came to do homage and to adore the universal King of the whole earth. What a shadow of a shade is all temporal dominion, compared with the dominion of Jesus! What unlimited homage we all owe Him! How we should rejoice to acknowledge Him our King and Lord by our loyal obedience to Him.

3. This festival is especially the feast of those who were once outside the Church. We are all converts, at least by descent. Our ancestors were once pagans until the Vicar of Christ sent to our beloved country the Apostle who proclaimed to us the faith of Christ. This faith in many lands has faded now, and mockery sits on Juda's throne. Alas, to think that those who had the inheritance of the faith have lost it! How can I ever be grateful enough for the light that shines on me?

14.—The Magi.

1. The three kings who came to do honour to Jesus on the feast of the Epiphany are also called the three Magi, or three Wise Men. They were the rulers of an Eastern tribe at some distance from Bethlehem. Like Abraham, they left home and country at God's command. If Abraham thus deserved to be called the Friend of God and Father of the Faithful, so these Wise Men were not only the subjects, but also the friends of Christ, and the spiritual Fathers of all faithful Catholics. We are their spiritual offspring; the innumerable company of Christians in Heaven will all have to thank them for having led the way to Jesus.

2. What led them to this long and apparently aimless journey? In their tribe there had long existed a tradition that one day or other a star would appear which the princes of the tribe were to follow, and following it, to find the King of Heaven incarnate upon earth. How many generations had looked and longed for the promised sign! Yet it came at last. God always grants sooner or later the desires of those who long after Him.

3. When the star appeared, the Magi lost no time in setting out to follow it. Prompt obedience was their watchword; prompt obedience brought them to Jesus. Prompt obedience made them the earliest converts and the earnest of God's Saints. Prompt obedience to God's holy will is the secret of all sanctity.

15.—Their Journey.

1. The journey of the Magi from their own country to Palestine, just because a star appeared in a certain quarter of the heavens, was very like a fool's errand. Was a mere floating tradition a sufficient ground for undertaking a long and costly journey? Were not their duties at home of more importance, and had they not a greater claim than this strange apparition which tempted them away? What is folly with man is often wisdom with God. How often have similar arguments been used to deter Protestants from making their submission to the Church, and to dissuade Catholics from consecrating themselves to God. Perhaps I may sometimes have followed the dictates of mere worldly wisdom, neglecting supernatural grace.

2. The star led the Magi on till they arrived at Jerusalem, and then it disappeared. In the bustle of the city no star. In the palace of Herod no star. The busy hum of the crowd, the mere intercourse with the world, seems to be a hindrance to God's holy inspirations.

3. Did the Magi, under these circumstances, accept the situation, and devote their time to the sights and wonders of the Holy City? No, nothing would satisfy them except the fulfilment of their mission. What a lesson to us, who are so easily diverted by worldly things from seeking after God!

16.—The Magi's Stay at Jerusalem.

1. When the star disappeared, the Magi were not disconcerted. If God saw fit to withdraw His direct and extraordinary supernatural guidance, they must fall back on the ordinary means. So they sought for information from those on the spot as to the birthplace of the King of the Jews. Sometimes God leads us by His holy inspirations, sometimes He leaves us to discover His will by natural means. We cannot expect to live always in the blaze of supernatural light showing us the way.

2. When Herod heard of the arrival of these distinguished strangers, and of their inquiries after a new-born King, he was troubled. The tyrant dreaded lest he should be superseded. It is one of the miseries of pride that it lives in continual dread of being set aside and humbled. Humility is never troubled, because it always loves the lowest place and rejoices in its own discomfiture.

3. The priests, when consulted, declared with one voice that Bethlehem was to be the birthplace of the King of the Jews. Yet they manifested no desire to follow the Magi thither. Their knowledge of the truth created in them no wish to carry it into practice. They could teach others, but they did not themselves act on the lessons they taught. How often have I done the same! I preach so well: I practise so ill.

17.—Their Arrival at Bethlehem.

1. When the Wise Men had obtained the information they needed, they wasted no further time at Jerusalem, but turned their steps towards the village of Bethlehem. Their faith was being very sorely tried. The star had disappeared; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, instead of sharing their eagerness to find the new-born King, seemed to be either indifferent or positively hostile to the idea of His presence in their midst. So Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament lies waiting in the Tabernacle for a visit from those whom He loves. They have no longing after Him, no desire for His company. Only a few faithful souls go to pay their court to Him. Am I one of them?

2. Scarce had they quitted the city when the star appeared again to their joyful eyes. There it is; there is no mistaking it! God has not deserted us! He is still guiding us, and we shall find Him whom we seek. No wonder that they rejoiced with great joy. So to those who have persevered amid doubt and darkness God soon restores the light of His presence. Courage, faint heart, the star will soon reappear!

3. At length the star, instead of moving above them in the heavens, came nearer to earth, and settled over the humble dwelling-place where Jesus and His Mother abode. What! the King of the Jews in that poverty-stricken shed? Yes, so it is; Christ scorns the gilded palace, and loves the humble hut. There He is at home; thither He invites His friends to come and see how He dwells with the poor and humble of heart.

18.—The Finding of Christ.

1. It must have been rather a surprise to the Magi to find the new-born King so poorly housed and humbly clad. Their Eastern ideas of magnificence must have had rather a shock from the absence of all visible splendour from the cradle of the King of kings. Yet their faith never wavered. God was their teacher, and they had learned from Him the difficult lesson of not judging by outward appearances and the impressions of sense.

2. With beating hearts they knock at the door, and Joseph opens to them. Within they find Him whom they were seeking, in the arms of Mary His Mother. That humble dwelling is full of a celestial light. Sweet songs of angel minstrelsy ring in their ears. Their hearts are full of an unspeakable joy and assurance that before them they have the King of the Jews, nay, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Saviour and their God.

3. The first impulse of their hearts is to fall prostrate before that little Child. They fell down and adored Him! What a happiness it was to them to make their submission to Him. To profess their loyalty, to declare that they belonged to Him body and soul for time and for eternity. O Jesus, to Thee and to Thee only I belong. Make me Thy faithful servant now and for ever.

19.—Their Gifts: (1) Gold.

1. Why did the Magi offer gold to the Babe in Mary's arms? It was in recognition of Him as their King. It was the tribute by which they declared themselves His vassals, professed their loyal submission to His sway. This is the very foundation of all supernatural virtue, not only to acknowledge Christ as our King, but to pay Him the homage which is His due as the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth.

2. The Magi also by their offering of gold gave to Him the most precious gift they had to give. They were the first Christian almsgivers, and their almsgiving was a pattern to all who should follow them. They gave liberally; they gave royally; they gave gifts which cost them something. Is this the character of my almsgiving? Or do I give sparingly and grudgingly? I must not forget that Christ sees and remembers not only the amount of the gifts I give to Him, but the spirit in which they are given.

3. The gold of the Magi also signifies the virtue of charity, without which we can do nothing to please God. Charity is the gold fire-tried which He counsels the tepid to buy of Him. It is the virtue which is the standard by which the value of all other virtues is tested. It is the virtue which caused Jesus Christ to come and dwell upon earth. O that I had more self-denying charity to others, more of the gold wherewith Heaven is bought!

20.—Their Gifts: (2) Frankincense.

1. The offering of frankincense to any one has always been regarded by the common consent of mankind as an acknowledgment of inherent deity. When the Christians were commanded to throw a grain of incense on the altar of Jupiter or Minerva, it was in acknowledgment of their divinity. The Magi, then, by this offering to Christ of incense, were the first Gentile witnesses to His Divinity. They made thereby an implicit act of faith in His Godhead, and proved the honour they paid Him to be that highest honour that belongs to God alone.

2. Frankincense is, moreover, a symbol of all that is sweetest and most fragrant. What so sweet to Jesus as the complete offering of ourselves to Him implied in the homage paid to Him as God? Jesus, my God, my all, I offer Thee my heart, my soul, my self!

3. Frankincense is the material symbol under which prayer is indicated in Holy Scripture. The Angel offers in the Apocalypse the prayers of the Saints in a golden censer, and there comes up continually from earth the cloud of prayers as a cloud of incense. Among them my prayers arise. Are they such as will be fragrant and pleasing to God?

21.—Their Gifts: (3) Myrrh.

1. Myrrh is the herb used most largely for embalming. It has the power to prevent corruption, and preserve the purity and freshness of the body which is in contact with it. It was offered to our Lord as a testimony, not only of the perfect and unsullied purity of those to whom He is united by the bonds of charity, but also in evidence of the power of His Sacred Body to save from corruption those who partake of It in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

2. Thus myrrh was offered to our Lord as possessing a true human body, as being truly Man as well as truly God. We must never lose sight of this fact of Christ's Humanity, that He has all the sympathy and interest in all that concerns us that we have perhaps received from some kind earthly friend, all His desire to help us, all His wisdom, prudence, patience, appreciation of our griefs and sorrows; and all this to a degree compared with which our best friend on earth does not deserve the name. Why do I not have recourse to Him more?

3. Myrrh is also the symbol of mortification. If our bodies are to be pure, we must mortify our evil desires and give up what is very attractive to our lower nature. If we desire great purity of heart, we must mortify ourselves in things lawful, and deny ourselves even what we might enjoy without sin. Do I do this?

22.—Their Return Home.

1. Before the Magi left Jerusalem for Bethlehem, Herod had enjoined upon them that they should return and tell him where the new-born King of the Jews was to be found, declaring that he too desired to come and adore Him. Hypocrite and treacherous liar that he was, his real object was to destroy his supposed rival. He made no scruple of planning the murder of one who might possibly supplant him. Those who love worldly honour are always unscrupulous. It has the power of blinding the eyes and deadening the conscience, and making men esteem evil good and good evil.

2. The Magi seem to have been deceived by Herod's fair words, and to have promised to return with the information he asked for. Good men are always unsuspicious of evil. We all judge others by ourselves. If you want to know your own character, ask yourself whether your judgment of others is a charitable or uncharitable one.

3. When the Magi had finished their visit to Bethlehem, they prepared to return to Herod. But an Angel warned them to avoid the city where he dwelt, and to go back to their own country by some other way. We need never fear lest our charitable judgments should do harm. God will provide against this; it is our harsh and severe judgments which are productive of so much evil to ourselves and others.

23.—Herod's Vengeance.

1. When Herod found that the Magi did not return with the information respecting the King whom they were seeking, he became uneasy. The plan he had cunningly devised had come to nought; the rival monarch seemed likely to escape his hands. One day perhaps he or his children would be dethroned by Him. O empty fears! That little Child seeks no worldly honour; He will not interfere with any earthly monarch. The secret fear that destroys the peace of unscrupulous men is often as empty as Herod's. The terrors they suffer are the just rewards of their evil deeds. How often I have been anxious and troubled because my pride could not brook being humbled!

2. But Herod was utterly unscrupulous as well as ambitious. There was one way in which he could secure this end. By putting to death all the young children in the country round Bethlehem, he would compass the death of this royal Child. Pride and ambition not only blind men, but make them utterly indifferent to the sufferings of others and the laws of right and wrong. I, too, have often recklessly made others suffer to gratify myself and carry out my own selfish ends.

3. When Herod came to die, how awful must have been the terrors of his guilty conscience. The blood of those children slaughtered at his command had long cried out to Heaven for vengeance. Each one of them added to his remorse and eternal misery in Hell. If evil men foresaw the consequences to themselves of the sins they commit, they would dread sin, even venial sin, far more than any earthly misery they could suffer.

24.—The Angel's Warning.

One night when Joseph was peacefully sleeping at Bethlehem, an Angel's voice aroused him from his slumbers, and he saw before him one of the messengers of the Most High, who said: "Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and fly into the land of Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." Hence observe:

1. That God's ways are very different from ours. We should have expected that He would exert His Divine power in behalf of His only-begotten Son, and that the soldiers of Herod would be struck with blindness on the road, or would somehow fail to discover where Jesus was, or perhaps would come and fall prostrate at the feet of the new-born King. How different the course enjoined by the Angel! Apparently so clumsy a way of saving Jesus from His enemies. Yet such are God's ways —clumsy in the eyes of men. What strange presumption it is that I should criticize the Divine arrangements as I sometimes do.

2. Then the conditions of safety seemed so unnecessarily hard. Why to Egypt? A pagan land, the very name of which was a synonym for bondage and misery. Was this the only way to preserve the life of the Son of God? To all this one answer: It was God's will, and that was enough.

3. But after all it was but a vision of the night, perhaps a dream or a mere subjective fancy. Could anything so wild and imprudent come from God? To all this one answer: I know the message came from God, and I cannot and will not evade the Divine command,

25.—Joseph's Obedience.

1. No such questioning as we have supposed in our last meditation ever occurred to St. Joseph's mind. His duty, his pleasure was to hear and to obey. Not a moment did he lose. He roused his Virgin Spouse and told her what they had to do, and ere morning dawned, they had left Bethlehem far behind.

2. Yet there was no hurry or bustle or undue haste in the preparation they made. No rushing to and fro, no impatience, not a movement but such as was calm and deliberate, modest and dignified. It is one of the marks of sanctity to have thus under control every look and every action. How can I stand this test? When time presses, or my indignation is aroused, or my patience tried, am I gentle and peaceful and calm?

3. Observe, moreover, how there is not a single word of complaint or of grumbling, no expression of annoyance or word of mutual commiseration. Each seeks to lighten the work of the other. How cheerful both Mary and Joseph are — almost joyous! It is a trial, yes, but more for the sake of the Divine Child than for their own. Even the thought of what Jesus may have to suffer never destroys their peace. O happy Joseph! O blessed Mary! make me more like you.

26.—The Perils of the Way.

1. Out into the darkness of the night went Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Can these homeless wanderers really be the three whose value in the eyes of Heaven made all the rest of the world insignificant as a grain of sand compared with a continent? Yes, this is God's way of treating those whom He loves best. Herod, in his luxurious palace, is feasting and revelling: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are shivering in the cold and stormy night. How foolish then to desire ease and comfort, or to regret the hardships and disagreeables that befall me!

2. Whither were they going? To Egypt, along an unknown road to a distant and idolatrous country; not knowing the way, not knowing how long they should find subsistence from day to day. What was the trial of Abraham compared with this? He went forth with an escort of servants and camels, and tents, and a store of good things; the Divine Son of God and His parents are empty-handed and alone. Compassionate the Holy Family in their sufferings by the way.

3. What were those sufferings? Often they knew not where to lay their heads, and had to sleep under the starry sky. Sometimes they were in danger from the rough bandits who infested the road. Sometimes the wild beasts howled around them. This was a model of the life of the Christian. Sometimes deprived of all spiritual sustenance and of all human consolation: sometimes fiercely attacked by men: sometimes by evil passions and the rage of Satan: yet always safe under the watchful care of God.

27.—The Arrival in Egypt.

1. At length they reached the spot that God designed for their sojourn, in a land full of idols and idolaters. What uncongenial surroundings for the Holy Family, alone in the midst of those who worshipped a false god. How painful for them to see God thus dishonoured. In the same way many a Catholic has to dwell in a most uncongenial atmosphere—perhaps among heretics, or bad Catholics, or those whose words and looks and actions continually jar and cause pain. Patience! Jesus and Mary know by experience what such have here to suffer.

2. When the Holy Family arrived in Egypt, in the town where they came to dwell, all the idols in the temples fell prostrate to the ground, and were shattered to pieces. Thus when Christ comes to dwell within the soul, all that opposes itself to God is destroyed by His sacred Presence. If Jesus dwells with us, we shall no longer allow pride, envy, bitterness, self-will, discontent, to reign in our hearts.

3. The presence of the Holy Family in Egypt hallowed the spot where they sojourned. In early Christian times it was covered with the cells of the monks and hermits. Thus Jesus always leaves a blessing behind Him. When He comes to me in Holy Communion, if only I put no obstacle in the way, my soul will flourish with virtues and good works as the effect of His Presence.

28.—The Long Waiting.

1. From week to week and month to month the Holy Family remained in the land of Egypt. From day to day they knew not whether they were to spend all their days in banishment, far from the dear land of Israel, or to return thither, it might be on the morrow; yet no shade of impatience ever marred the perfection of their peace and resignation to the will of God. How different from myself, who am so anxious and troubled about the future!

2. During all this time, St. Joseph supported his holy Spouse and the Infant Jesus by working at his trade of a carpenter. They often felt the pinch of poverty, but never wanted for bread. God forsakes not His own, though He sometimes tries them to the very edge of their powers of endurance. He will not forsake me, if I put my trust in Him.

3. How little the people of Egypt knew who it was that dwelt amongst them! If they had known it, they would eagerly have cast aside their idols, and thrown themselves at the feet of the King of heaven and earth. So if those outside the Catholic Church knew that on every altar God Himself dwells in the Blessed Sacrament, how they would come in crowds to make their humble submission to Him. Hence learn a great charity to those outside the Church of Christ. It is often ignorance, not malice, that stands in the way of their conversion.

29.—The Return Home.

1. At length, when it seemed as if God had almost forgotten His well-beloved Son, the summons came to return to the land of Israel. An Angel appeared to Joseph with the welcome news that those who had sought the life of Jesus were dead, and that therefore they might go back in safety. Those who are willing to wait are sure to obtain their desires. It is impatience, and the restless desire for immediate relief, that lead to so many disappointments. In the things of God, as in all else, it is those who wait who win.

2. How full of joy were the hearts of Joseph and Mary, as they neared once more their native land! Like all the Saints, they had an intense love for their country and their people and their home. Holy indifference does not mean that we have no natural affections for kindred and for fatherland, but that those affections are entirely subordinate to the will of God.

3. If the people of Egypt knew not that their God was dwelling among them, they knew that they had amongst them those who were the special friends of God. Mary and Joseph had endeared themselves to all around by their gentleness, charity, patience, courtesy, humility, thoughtful kindness to all. To them how terrible a grief was the departure of the Holy Family! Do I endear myself to those among whom I live?

30.—The Arrival in Palestine.

1. When Joseph arrived with Mary and her Divine Son in their own land, his first thought was to turn to Bethlehem, and to dwell in peace where he had dwelt so peaceably before. But to his sorrow he learned that the son of the impious Herod was ruling in his father's place. He was not going to expose to any risk the treasure committed to him, and at once he determined to turn his steps elsewhere. Notice his prudence, and beware of running any risk with the treasures of grace God has committed to you. One serious sin will lose them all.

2. Whither should he go? It was all one to St. Joseph, as long as he went whither God sent him. He was quite as ready to go to Nazareth as anywhere else, if God directed his steps thither. This should be my disposition, to be ready to go anywhere, and live in any place, where God may send me.

3. How did St. Joseph decide where he was to dwell? By prayer and by good counsel. He asked of God to turn his steps whither He willed, and he also did not neglect the rules of human prudence. This is St. Ignatius' advice: (1) Act with prudence, but never forget to consult God. (2) While you trust all to God, do not lose sight of the importance of using natural means.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

MEDITATIONS FROM THE FEAST OF OUR LADY'S ESPOUSALS TO SHROVE TUESDAY.

I.—The Hidden Life.

1. The life of each member of the Holy Family was from the first a hidden life, for it was a life hidden with God, and concealed from the busy world. The life of Jesus in Mary's womb was thus the model of the lives of all who desire to give themselves entirely to God ; a life completely withdrawn from all that could interfere with a continual thought of God, and a continual union with Him by acts of adoration and of love. This should be my aim, at least during such portions of the day as I am able to give to prayer and to spiritual things.

2. But a life of complete removal from external things is not possible on earth. It is reserved for the Blessed in Heaven. Even Joseph and Mary had sometimes to turn their thoughts to earthly things, and to the cares of life. Yet they never lost sight of God, and amid the most distracting occupations, the remembrance of Him was ever in their hearts. This should be my constant endeavour ; thus to lead a hidden life by having ever hidden in my heart the precious treasure of the love of God.

3. But the hidden life of Mary and Joseph was from the very first much more than this ; they in the midst of the most distracting cares had the gift of always having the thought of God actually present to them. Their conscious intercourse with Him never ceased. This is the nearest approach to the life of the Angels that is possible for mortal man on earth. What a contrast to my life, so often absorbed in worldly trifles !

2.—Mary's Hidden Life.

1. Though Mary's life was essentially a hidden life, even from the beginning, yet we may date the hidden life which she enjoyed as Mother of God from the moment when He came to dwell in her chaste womb. Before this she had the thought of God always in her heart; now she had God Himself within her. By day and by night, sleeping and waking, she had the Infinite God not only present to her, not only within her, but bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh. Who can understand this mystery? who can ever fathom the depth of God's love for Mary, if He could rejoice in dwelling in her immaculate womb?

2. St. Paul was so closely united to Jesus, that he could say with literal truth, "It is no more I that live, but Christ that lives in me." How far more truly and literally could Mary make these words her own. In every possible sense they were true of her during the nine months that followed. Yet with us in Holy Communion our Lord makes Himself one in a manner scarcely less wonderful. Ask yourself how far you can make St. Paul's words your own.

3. What, too, can have been the nature of the intercourse of Mary with Him who was far nearer to her than to any other of all the creatures that He had made? Her prayers had not to be carried up by angels to the throne of God; for God had come down to be not only her guest, but was so entirely one with her, that every throb of her heart was echoed in His. Wonder at Mary's privileges, and reflect what must have been her unapproachable holiness to have merited them.

3.—The Hidden Life at Bethlehem.

1. When the Son of God first appeared among the children of men, He chose no ordinary dwelling for His birthplace. Not even the little cottage at Nazareth, not even the humblest room in the humblest of the shepherds' huts at Bethlehem, but a stable—a place quite unfit for human habitation. There it was that Mary had to take shelter, there it was that God made Man first saw the light of day. Compassionate Jesus and Mary on what seems to us so unworthy of the dignity of God and His Holy Mother.

2. Why did Jesus choose a stable for the place of His Nativity? It was not merely on account of its poverty, or the discomforts it brought with it, but also because it was of all places the last where men would naturally look for the Son of God, and therefore the one where He would most perfectly fulfil the words of Holy Scripture, "Truly Thou art a hidden God!" As He completely concealed His Divine glory under the veil of flesh, so He concealed the glory attaching to Him as Man by seeking all those circumstances where it would be most entirely out of sight. What a contrast to myself, who seek to make the most of all that I think would tend to my own honour, and exalt me in the eyes of men.

3. There was another reason why Jesus thus hid Himself. He desired to teach us that if we wished to live in close union with God, we must live a hidden life, far away from the busy crowd and the din and strife of human society. Even if our lot is cast in the midst of the world's din and tumult, yet in heart and desire we must seek to dwell with Jesus in the retirement of the peaceful stable at Bethlehem.

4.—The Days of Purification.

1. During the forty days that followed on child-birth, Jewish women were regarded as impure; they were not allowed to enter the Temple, or to touch things holy, but had to live in seclusion at home. Was Mary subject to this law? was she in any sense impure through her having brought forth the Divine Son of God? On the contrary, He consecrated and increased her spotless purity by dwelling in her immaculate womb. She was made more holy, more glorious than ever, by the fact of her bringing into the world the King of Heaven and earth.

2. Why then did Mary undergo the time of Purification? It seems almost to imply that she was impure, like all the other daughters of Eve. Yet Mary submitted to it, out of love of the laws that God had laid down for His people. Each detail of the ordinances and customs prescribed with Divine sanction was dear to her, and she rejoiced to obey.

3. Mary had another reason for submitting herself to the humiliating seclusion. Anything that lowered her in the eyes of men was a source of heartfelt joy to her. Her humility delighted in anything that served to hide her high privileges from the eyes of those around her. How different am I, who am anxious to conceal all that lowers me in the eyes of others, and to make known whatever I think will exalt me before them. O Mary, pray for me, that I may have more of thy spirit of true humility!

5.—The Lessons of the Purification.

1. How was it that Almighty God allowed the spotless Virgin to submit to what seemed to justify the inference that Mary did not differ from the rest of the Jewish women, and even that the Son of God was born in the same condition as any other child? Jesus had come to be made sin for us; and therefore took upon Himself all the consequences of sin as far as His sinless and Divine Nature permitted. Mary then, on account of her share in the work of redemption, had to submit to the same law. She had to share all the various forms of suffering and ignominy that Jesus took upon Himself, so far as one could whose nature was wholly created by God.

2. Already by His Circumcision Jesus had appeared, as it were, in the character of a sinner; and therefore it was but fitting that Mary should appear as one who needed purification. Yet how false, how blasphemous the inference! Learn never to judge rashly, however plausible the inference may seem to be.

3. As our Lord prayed and fasted, to teach us the importance of prayer and fasting, though He needed neither; so Mary was purified, that we might learn how essential to us it is that we should purify ourselves from all defilement, if we are to be fit to approach the God of infinite purity, and to hold sweet communion with Him in His temple. It is that we may learn how in the sight of God not even the angels are pure, that Mary Immaculate, of all creatures the purest, spent these thirty days of legal purification.

6.—The Presentation in the Temple.

1. When the days of the Purification were ended, Mary carried up her Divine Son to present Him in the Temple. What were the thoughts of Jesus as He was placed in the hands of the High Priest, and offered to His Eternal Father? He was repeating in His Heart those words of the Prophet, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it, yea, Thy law is within my heart." This was the end and aim of every action, word, and thought of Jesus at every moment of His Life. How far is it the end and aim of all that I say and do?

2. What was Mary thinking of, as she ascended the steps of the Temple with her little Son in her arms? She was saying to herself that she was indeed blessed among women, in that she was able to offer to God a gift far more precious in His sight than all the world beside. She was offering to Him the only gift worthy of the Divine Majesty —a gift of infinite value. She was offering to God none else than God Himself veiled under the garb of flesh. O wonderful privilege, granted to Mary's unequalled holiness!

3. What were the thoughts of St. Joseph as he walked by Mary's side? He was praying God to make Him worthy of the wondrous privilege conferred upon him of being the guardian of Jesus and of Mary. He was full of a deep sense of the immense responsibility laid upon Him, and was thanking God for so astounding an honour, and begging that he might be faithful in every detail to God's holy inspirations, guiding him in the care of the unspeakable treasures committed to his charge.

7.—Holy Simeon.

1. When the ceremony of Presentation was over, an aged man advanced towards the little group, and took the Infant Jesus out of His Mother's arms. Sweetly he smiled upon the Child, and then looking up to Heaven he thanked God for having given him the privilege of seeing that happy day on which, in the Temple of the Lord, he saw the Lord of the Temple Himself presented to His Eternal Father. Now he was content to depart in peace; for this foretaste of Heaven made earth and earthly things grievous and wearisome to him. Has the presence of Jesus the same effect of making me dissatisfied with aught else than Him?

2. How long Simeon had been waiting for that day! Long years before, God had revealed to him that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. But year after year had passed, and he had almost begun to wonder whether he had been deceiving himself, in thinking that such a promise had been made him. So we have often to wait long before God fulfils His promises to us. Yet if we wait a little longer He will give us what we desire in rich abundance even beyond what He promised.

3. It must have appeared very strange to those who listened to him, that the holy man should speak of this little Child in what must have seemed to them such extravagant terms. They saw in Him nothing so wonderful. His father and mother were ordinary sort of people, of the lower class. It is the old story; the natural man judging by appearances; the spiritual man endowed with a clearer vision, and judging in accordance with the Truth of God.

8.—The Prophecy of Simeon.

1. When holy Simeon had finished his act of thanksgiving, and had blessed the Holy Family, he uttered the prophecy that still goes by his name, and that is especially remembered by us as having pierced with anguish the Immaculate Heart of Mary. "This Child is set for the fall and the resurrection of many in Israel." How could Jesus their Saviour be set for their fall? Yet so it is: to those who reject Him, He is not a Saviour, but a Judge.

2. How can this be? Because every grace rejected is not merely lost, but the loss leaves him who has rejected it in a worse condition than before. It actually proves the occasion of sorrow and regret to him. The fact of rejection injures and weakens the soul. My God, may I never knowingly reject any grace of Thine!

3. The last portion of Simeon's prophecy was a direct presage of anguish to Mary herself: Yea, through thine own soul a sword shall pierce. Mary knew well that these words contained a promise of sorrow such as no child of Adam had ever endured before. She knew this, and she joyfully accepted it for the sake of being like to her Divine Son, who, she well knew, was to be the Man of Sorrows. Am I thus willing to bear pain for His sake?

9.—Holy Anna.

1. After Simeon had handed back the Divine Child to His Mother, another dweller in the Temple came upon the scene. Holy Anna, an aged servant of God, who never left the Temple, and devoted her whole life to the prayer and praise of God, advanced under God's holy inspiration, to adore the Infant Christ, and pay her homage of respect, and congratulation to His Holy Mother and foster-father. She, too, had waited long for that crowning grace. She was eighty years old before it was vouchsafed to her. Perhaps I have been waiting long years for some grace; and think that it is too late now. Courage! it is never too late. Our greatest grace may come at eighty years of age.

2. Holy Anna, full of joy and happiness, confessed to the Lord, bearing witness before all that the Infant in Mary's arms was none other than the promised Messias, the Deliverer and the King of His people Israel, and the God and Lord of all the earth. Her long fasts and prayers had obtained for her the gift of faith so clear and vivid, that she saw beneath the veil of flesh the Divine Nature of the Babe before her. It is thus that the mental vision becomes quick in its discernment of heavenly things; those who pray and mortify themselves have always a keen appreciation of Divine truths.

3. Holy Anna did not keep to herself the knowledge that in their midst was the Lord of Heaven and earth. She spoke of Him to all the dwellers at Jerusalem. Happy those who speak of God to others! They shall shine like the stars to all eternity.

10.—The Hidden Life in Egypt.

1. If the life of the Holy Family was a hidden life in their own country, how much more was this the case in Egypt. There amid strangers and idolaters, they were bereft of all human sympathy and consolation. In Egypt, how sorely they missed the happiness of worshipping God in His Temple. How great a sorrow to them to be deprived of the weekly services of the Synagogue, and to miss the congenial companionship of those who were full of the love of God, and of a longing for the redemption of Israel. Are we pained when circumstances prevent us from our accustomed religious duties, or do we consider it rather as a relief?

2. Yet, after all, the loss of these external privileges was of small moment to Mary and Joseph. Had they not Jesus with them? and in His company what more could they desire? O happy indeed are those who have Jesus with them, and who walk always in His Presence. "When Jesus is present," says Thomas à Kempis, "all is well, and nothing seems difficult."

3. How are we to retain the presence of Jesus with us? "Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with you." This is the advice of à Kempis, this is the lesson that we learn from Mary and Joseph. Pride drives Him away, self-seeking and uncharitableness drive Him away. But humility and gentleness ensure the joy of His abiding Presence.

XI.—The Cottage at Nazareth.

1. On the return of the Holy Family from Egypt, St. Joseph, under the guidance of Almighty God, chose Nazareth as the home. It was a town of ill-repute, one of the very last that St. Joseph would have been inclined to select as a fitting home for Jesus and Mary. But he knew that it was the will of God that they should dwell there, and that was the only consideration that had any weight with Joseph. Is this the only one that has any weight with me?

2. At Nazareth began what we generally know by the name of the Hidden Life of Jesus. It comprises all the period from the return from Egypt until the beginning of His Public Life. It extends nigh over thirty years, whereas the Public Life extends only over three years. This was to teach us that the Hidden Life with God is the important element in our spiritual life, and that all external work is of little moment compared to this.

3. It seems strange at first sight that the Son of God should choose for Himself a town like Nazareth. But He had come to be the Friend of sinners, and to save sinners; and so it was but natural that He should dwell among sinners and those whom the world thought scorn of from the beginning. How little it matters where we dwell; if we have a humble and contented spirit, we shall make ourselves happy anywhere.

12.—Jesus at Nazareth.

1. What is it that comes out most prominently, as we watch the daily life of Jesus at Nazareth? Perhaps its most remarkable trait is its apparently ordinary and common-place character. There is nothing striking about it; nothing that men would deem heroic or worthy of admiration. The life of the Son of God was just the sort of life that would be lived by the son of any poor couple, who had to work for their daily bread. He helped His Mother in the work of the house, ran errands, and as time went on worked under the direction of His foster-father in the carpenter's shop. If these were the employments of the Son of God for twenty years, and more, shall I complain if my daily occupations are ordinary and matter of fact duties?

2. We next observe how all the work of Jesus was done under obedience, not because He liked it, or because it was useful, but simply because He was told to do it. Is this my motive in my actions? and do I rejoice in work done under obedience? or on the other hand, am I inclined to rebel against orders that are opposed to what I think is right and best?

3. Another feature of Jesus' work at Nazareth was that it apparently produced no results. There was nothing to show for it when it was done. The world estimates the value of any work by the external effects that it has to show. Judged by this standard, the time of the Son of God at Nazareth was wasted. Hence learn not to judge of work by its immediate results, since these are no test whether it produces solid fruit to the glory of God and the good of souls.

13.— The Carpenter's Shop.

1. Let us look into the humble shed where Joseph is working at his trade of a carpenter; and Jesus is working too, under the direction of His foster-father. Joseph's skill is not great; the products of his handiwork are not such as would find favour in a modern workshop. They are neat and carefully made, but they are not elaborate works of art. Yet in the eyes of God how beautiful and graceful they appear, how much more beautiful than any that ever proceeded from the hands of the most accomplished artist. Congratulate St. Joseph on the merit that he acquired by each stroke of his chisel and every blow of his hammer, and pray that your works may be of similar value in the sight of God.

2. What was it that gave to the labours of St. Joseph such exceeding value in the sight of the Most High? It was the purity of the motive with which they were done. This it is that decides the character of our actions in the sight of God, not their external comeliness. How will my actions stand this test? Are they not too often done from vanity, and a love of display, or from motives of selfishness, or a hope of earthly reward?

3. By Joseph's side his little assistant is at work. Observe how exactly He carries out in every detail His master's instructions. He never departs from them in the smallest detail, never attempts to improve upon them, or correct what is faulty in them. This is the perfection of true obedience; to carry out the will of the superior just as he wills it, and because he so wills it.

14.—Mary at Nazareth.

1. The life that Mary led at Nazareth was the nearest to the life of the Blessed in Heaven that had ever been witnessed in this valley of tears. In some respects we may say that it was even a happier life than that of the Angels and other Saints before the throne of God: for it had in it the germ and hope and promise of a life far more glorious than that of any other of the holy ones of God. Even on earth she loved God more perfectly, and was more closely united to Him, so far as was possible to one who was not yet in possession of the Beatific Vision.

2. Yet Mary's life was full of crosses and trials. None ever suffered as she, because none ever shared so fully in the life of the Man of Sorrows; yet in spite of this she was intensely happy. Learn that suffering borne for God is not a source of misery or unhappiness, but goes hand in hand with joy and peace and cheerfulness and lightness of heart.

3. What was the source of Mary's joy? It was the presence of Jesus. How could she be aught else but joyful, in His Divine company? What was the source of her sorrow? It was the knowledge that her Son and God would be rejected, and set at naught, and one day would endure an agony that none of the sons of men could bear, save only He, whose Divine Nature joined to His Humanity gave Him an indefinite capacity for suffering. This thought it was that made Mary always sorrowful, even as she gazed on His Divine beauty. Do I ever feel any real sorrow at the thought of the sufferings of Jesus?

15.—Joseph at Nazareth.

1. No mortal man ever had a post of such responsibility as St. Joseph. To his care was entrusted a treasure of infinite value. He had to provide for the safety and welfare of God Himself. Yet St. Joseph never quailed, never was downhearted under the task that he had to perform. How was this? It was because he knew well that God never gives to any one a charge, without at the same time giving the graces necessary for the performance of it. This relieved him of all fruitless anxiety. So also it should console me, if I am tempted to lose heart and be cast down under my responsibilities.

2. What were the graces that were specially necessary to St. Joseph as the foster-father of Jesus? Every possible grace. Every virtue must have been found in him in an heroic degree; the absence of any one of them would have rendered him quite unfitted for his task. So to me Jesus commits Himself in Holy Communion. How far can I find in myself this qualification of the possession of every virtue? Alas! how many are almost or wholly absent!

3. Yet one virtue was more necessary, if possible, than any of the rest. Prudence was the first qualification of St. Joseph's office. He was above all a faithful and prudent servant. Without this the Divine Son of God would never have been committed to his care. In me, alas! prudence is a virtue that is sadly wanting. How imprudent are my words, how impulsive and often ill judged are my actions!

16.—The Obedience of Jesus.

1. The obedience of Jesus was the type and pattern of the only kind of obedience that is really pleasing to God. It is therefore most important that we should examine its leading characteristics. It was a willing obedience. Jesus undertook any task that was laid upon Him. No thought of discontent, no secret whisper of complaint was ever breathed in His Heart, however hard or distasteful the work assigned Him. Learn from Him never to murmur in your heart, never to complain, even though it may cost you much to do the work that duty imposes.

2. It was, moreover, a cheerful obedience. Jesus received every command with an expression of thankfulness and actual joy, as if it were some boon that was being conferred upon Him. This is the perfection of obedience, to consider the orders given us as gifts from the hand of God, intended by Him as means to our greater good and to our eternal happiness.

3. It was also a blind obedience. He never allowed Himself to question the prudence of the order He received. It was enough for Him that it was an order, coming to Him from one who was in the place of a superior to Him, and who therefore represented Almighty God to Him. How often we, on the contrary, allow ourselves to pass sentence on the arrangements of our superiors, and to condemn them in our hearts, and perhaps with our lips also.

17.—The Brethren of Jesus.

1. At Nazareth dwelt also Mary of Salome, and with her her children, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Jude, the cousins of Jesus. They grew up with Him in the same little town, but their frequent intercourse seems to have made little or no impression on them at the time. They knew not that their playmate and relative was none other than their Creator and their God. Yet they were men of good-will, and all of them afterwards became apostles or disciples of our Lord. If they were thus blind, can we wonder that so many outside the Church are blind to her claims on their obedience? Learn never to judge them harshly.

2. How can we account for this? One reason was that God did not give them the grace necessary for the recognition of the Divinity of the Son of Mary. We sometimes blame others that they do not do this or that, but we never think of considering whether it may not be that God has not yet given them the requisite grace, and therefore they have not the power to do it.

3. It was, moreover, the constant endeavour of Jesus to conceal His glory. He had emptied Himself of it all when He came down from Heaven, for He knew that the true road to glory is to conceal from others what we think will cause them to admire us. Alas! how different am I, who am so anxious to show off whatever natural advantages I think I possess, and what is worse, I can pretend to possess those which I know quite well that I have not.

18.—The Hidden Life at Nazareth.

1. When we contrast the life of our Lord at Nazareth with the life that we should naturally have expected Him to live, it seems as though He were throwing away opportunities of good. If He had preached in Rome and Athens, if He had visited the chief cities of the world, would not His Divine eloquence have converted tens of thousands? Why then did He remain living a life of inaction at Nazareth? It seems strange to us, but we must recognize that God's ways are not like ours.

2. We often wonder why it is that God allows those who have great abilities or power of doing good, to remain hidden and out of sight. Sometimes He deprives them of the health and strength necessary for active work; sometimes He cuts short their career just when they are beginning to make their influence felt; sometimes He leaves them where their life seems absolutely thrown away. We are inclined to regret it, and perhaps to think that we would have ordered it otherwise. But in view of the Hidden Life at Nazareth, all such regrets must of necessity disappear.

3. Would greater glory have been given to God if the Son of God had exercised His Divine power and converted all mankind while on earth, as He might easily have done? No, for that which pleases God best is that we should remain where He has placed us, even though our lives are apparently useless. Never was a life so apparently useless as the life of Jesus at Nazareth. Yet every moment of it brought a glory to God compared with which the glory He derives from the service of all the Saints and Angels is as nothing.

19.—The Lesson of the Hidden Life.

1. What was the lesson that the Hidden Life at Nazareth was designed to teach? It was simply this that the highest and most perfect kind of life does not consist in one occupation more than another, not in severe penances, not in active zeal, not in works of self-denying charity, not in living remote from all in order to spend one's life in contemplation and prayer, but simply in doing the will of God from day to day. This and naught else is the secret of all sanctity—to do the will of God simply and solely because it is the will of God, from day to day.

2. Is this an easy lesson? No, it is the most difficult lesson in the whole world. He who has really learnt it in its perfection is already a great saint. It means that self and self-will is dead within him, and that he can say with the Apostle, "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me." How far from this am I, in whom self lives, and is so strong!

3. Is this an important lesson? It is the most important lesson in the whole world as it is the most difficult. Without having learned it we can never attain to solid or lasting happiness. We are always exposed to have our happiness destroyed by something that we think we have reason to regret; something that interferes with our self-will, or threatens to interfere with our comfort, or with what we fancy will tend to our welfare or happiness. If only we could learn the secret of doing the will of God simply because it is His will, our life would be a heaven upon earth.

20.—The Learning of the Lesson.

1. If the lesson of doing the will of God from day to day is such an all-important one, we must inquire diligently into the conditions necessary for learning it. Can it be quickly learned? The answer to this question is found in the fact that our Lord devoted thirty out of His three and thirty years on earth to the learning of it; and this though He was absolutely perfect in it from the very first. This was to teach us that the lesson can only be learnt after long years of constant endeavour; nay, there are few indeed who learn it as they ought, even in a lifetime.

2. What are the means of learning it? Like all other practical lessons it can only be learnt by practice. It is only by making the law of our lives the will of God, however manifested to us, that it can become the real principle animating them. Too often, alas, the law of our action is our own will and our own inclination. We act on impulse: we do just what we naturally desire without any other thought. As long as this is so there is no place left for the will of God.

3. We must not expect the process to be at first a pleasant one. It is no agreeable task at the beginning to sacrifice our own wills. It is a painful process. But as time goes on it loses all its painfulness, and becomes attractive, and at length the act of obliterating self to substitute God in its place is a real delight. This it was to the Saints; this in the end I hope it may be to me.

21.—The Obstacles to its Acquirement.

1. What is it that makes it so difficult for us to do the will of God from day to day? It is mainly because we are not fully convinced that all true happiness is to be found in God and God alone. We go on trying to attain to happiness by doing our own will, even when we are conscious that it is opposed to the will of God. Yet we know by experience that all attempts to be happy without God prove miserable failures in the end.

2. Another obstacle is our inordinate love of our own will. It is one of the consequences of free-will, in our fallen state, that a certain satisfaction is found in the mere arbitrary exercise of it. It is only when we have learnt the joy without bound or limit that is to be found in doing the holy will of God, that we are willing to forego the indulgence of our own will in order to put the will of God in its place. Then God's will becomes ours, or rather our own will disappears, swallowed up in the Infinite Will of God.

3. Yet there is another obstacle consisting in the pain and suffering which are, from time to time, sure to accompany a faithful performance of the will of God. He permits this for the greater glory of His elect. Now pain and suffering are naturally very distasteful to us. We shrink from them instinctively. We require a very strong motive to enable us to face them. Nothing can counteract them save a strong fear and love of God.

This then must be my prayer: "Pierce through my flesh with Thy fear. Grant, O Lord, that I may love Thee ever more and more."

22.—The Visit to Jerusalem.

1. Every grown-up man among the Jews was bound once each year to go up to Jerusalem, in order to pay a visit to the Temple. This was in order to keep fresh and bright the love for the place where God in an especial manner dwelt, and to preserve the faith of those who lived far away. We are not bound to visit Rome, as the Jews were to visit Jerusalem. But nevertheless we should esteem it high privilege to visit the tombs of the Apostles, and the home of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

2. Women were under no obligation to pay this yearly visit; but Mary accompanied her husband year by year. It was a joy to her to which she looked forward with joyous expectation to each returning Pasch, crying out in her heart, My soul longeth for the courts of the Lord, for the courts of the house of my God! How sweet were the memories that the Temple recalled to her. She thought of the happy years of her infancy and childhood, spent within those sacred portals; she thought of her espousals with her dear husband; she thought of the day when with a joyful heart, she presented her Divine Son in the Temple. Congratulate Mary on these happy reminiscences.

3. When Jesus was twelve years old, He went with His parents on their annual visit. He the Lord of the Temple, went up to worship there as if He had need of pardon for the past, or aid from God to preserve His youthful steps in the right way. If He thus went up to pray, how all-important prayer must be for a poor sinner like me

23.—The Journey Home.

1. It was the custom in the caravans that used to go up to Jerusalem for the Pasch, that men and women should travel separately. Children would travel with either company. Hence on the journey home from Jerusalem St. Joseph thought that Jesus was with His Holy Mother, and Mary thought that He was with Joseph. Each of them was always thinking of Him, and longed to have Him with them, but in their unselfish love for each other each was willing to forego the joy of His company for the other's sake. Learn from them to be unselfish, even in spiritual things.

2. When they halted for the night, each was astonished to find that He was not with the other. In sorrow and anxiety they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. But no, they found Him not, He was not in the returning company. O how bitter was Mary's sorrow! How keen the distress of her holy Spouse! Condole with them, and try to realize the intensity of their anguish.

3. We sometimes lose Jesus, and in our case it is too often through our own fault. It is not through our unselfishness, as in the case of Joseph and Mary, but through our selfishness and self-will and unfaithfulness to grace. Yet how strangely indifferent we are to our loss. Perhaps we have even lost Him altogether through some serious sin. At all events we have alienated Him by deliberate venial sin. Yet we have little or none of the sorrow that Joseph and Mary felt when they lost Him through no fault of their own. Pray for a keener appreciation of the misery of being in any way separated from Jesus.

24.—The Search after Jesus.

1. When Mary and Joseph failed to find Jesus among their kinsfolk and acquaintance, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. What were their thoughts during that dreary and desolate time? Did they blame themselves for carelessness in not making sure that their Divine Son was among the home-bound company? We can scarcely think so. No reasonable precaution had been neglected. They had not to add to the bitterness of their sorrow, that the loss of Jesus was through their own fault. It is a great mistake ever to blame ourselves for any misfortune however great, when we know that we have acted for the best, and have not done anything to offend God.

2. Yet who shall gauge the desolation of their aching hearts? There was a void in them that all the world could not supply. Had Jesus left them never to return? Were they to live henceforward bereft of the Light that had made the life in the little cottage at Nazareth a little Heaven upon earth? Without Jesus, what else would their life be but a living death? Condole with the darkness and desolation that gathered over their souls, and pray for the help of Joseph and Mary, in your own days of darkness and discouragement.

3. Amidst all that time of anguish Joseph and Mary never for one instant lost their confidence in God and their resignation to His holy will. *Fiat voluntas tua* was their motto from first to last. They did not complain of the loss of Jesus, which was to them far worse than death. Learn from them the lesson of humble submission to the Divine will, even amid the heaviest trials.

25.—The Absence of Jesus.

1. What is it that causes the loss of Jesus, and His absence from our souls? In many cases, perhaps in most, it is our own sin. Mortal sin banishes Him altogether from our hearts. Venial sin does not drive Him altogether away, but destroys the freedom and happiness of our intercourse with Him. We no longer are able to rejoice with Him, and we lose our taste for heavenly things. O my God, grant in Thy mercy that I may never lose Thee by mortal sin, and that I may fight against those venial sins which build up a barrier between Thee and me.

2. We also often lose the brightness of Jesus presence through some negligence or infidelity to grace, which does not indeed amount to even venial sin, but nevertheless is quite sufficient to cause a sort of cloud between the soul and God. This is not unfrequently the explanation of darkness and desolation. God has asked something of us, and we have preferred our own will. Now God hates self-will, and we cannot expect peace and joy as long as we indulge it.

3. There is also a third cause of the loss of our consciousness of Jesus' presence, which is our own fault, thought not our present fault. Sometimes God leaves us in darkness on account of some fault in the past not yet atoned for. It rises up from the grave of forgetfulness, and deprives us of our happiness. What shall we do in such case? We must throw ourselves at the footstool of God's mercy, and with a sincere act of contrition beg Him to blot out all our past sins from the book of His remembrance, adding to this some penance for our sin.

26.—Other Causes of the Absence of Jesus.

1. The loss of Jesus is not always the result of some fault of ours, else Mary and Joseph would not have lost Him. Sometimes He permits it for our trial, to see whether we shall be faithful to Him in darkness and under difficulties. "Because thou camest to the service of God, it was necessary that temptation should try thee," are the words of the Angel to the aged Tobias. It is therefore in this case a mark of God's favour and approval. Is this the case with me? Perhaps so.

2. God in His mercy sometimes sends these days of desolation in order that we may thereby expiate our past sins, and that our souls may be cleansed from the stain of sin and from the liability to punishment for it. Thank God then for those times, however painful, that are the means of washing our souls clean and rendering them pure and fit for the presence of God! How we shall thank God for them when we see how they served us instead of Purgatory, and at the same time have earned for us a higher place in Heaven!

3. The loss of Jesus is also sometimes a signal mark of God's love. He knows that the faithful soul is able to endure the trial, and He knows too that those times of darkness are the times of the most rapid progress in the love and service of God. Then it is that we advance by leaps and bounds. We often make more progress in a day of darkness than in a week of sunshine. Remember this when trouble comes, and make a good use of such harvest-days.

27.—Jesus in the Temple.

1. Why was it that Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem without the knowledge of His parents? It was to teach us that He had a Father in Heaven, who had a claim before which that of an earthly parent must at once give way. He desired that we should understand that when God calls us we must obey, without any regard to the claims of those whose authority is but an authority delegated to them by Him. Hence no wish, no command of any earthly parent or ruler has any weight if it is in opposition to what God commands or wills, if once we are absolutely certain that it is He who commands or wills it.

2. Jesus remaining behind in Jerusalem turned His steps to His Father's house. The Temple was the spot where He loved to dwell, saying in the words of the Psalmist, "Here will I dwell, for I have chosen it." Is it my wont to turn my steps to the Temple of God, and to visit the Blessed Sacrament as I would visit some great and all-powerful friend when I am staying near the place where he abides?

3. How did Jesus spend those three days that He passed in Jerusalem? We have no record of their employment, save that we know from His own lips that He was about His Father's business. If this can always be said of us, it matters nothing what may be our external employment. This is the secret of sanctity, to be always doing, not what we like best, or what we have chosen for ourselves, but that which God gives us to do, either through the hands of our superiors, or through His holy inspirations directly conveyed to our souls.

28.—Jesus among the Doctors.

1. If we had been asked what would be the occupation of the Son of God in the Temple of His Father, we certainly should not have expected it to be to sit at the feet of those human teachers whose puny knowledge was but as a drop of water compared with the ocean of His Divine Wisdom, and who were indebted to Him for all that they knew. Yet He listened to them, as a learner to his masters, in order that He who came to be our Example in all things, might teach the young to show deference to the old, and all to sit humbly at the feet of those whom God has appointed to instruct and teach others His holy law.

2. What nonsense were the wisest sayings of these doctors, compared with even the human and acquired knowledge of the Boy who listened to them. Yet He showed no impatience, did not correct their imperfect utterances, did not even criticize what they said, but received with the reverence due to their age, their position, and their sacred office. Is this my spirit when I listen to those who are my appointed teachers, or do I criticize and find fault?

3. Jesus also asked questions of the Jewish doctors. This too was to instruct us. We should learn from Him to be eager and anxious for information on heavenly things. He who knew all things in Heaven and earth, needed no instruction, but we who are full of ignorance are liable to have our usefulness marred by our want of knowledge. We should lose no opportunity of seeking and searching, in order to supply our countless deficiencies.

29.—The Finding of Jesus.

1. For three days Joseph and Mary had sought in vain for Jesus. Every hour increased their agony of sorrow, and made the finding of Him whom they loved apparently more hopeless. Yet they did not cease from their weary, anxious task. In the darkest moments they never lost hope. We are too prone to lose hope when troubles come upon us. This is in many cases the reason why we do not succeed in obtaining what we desire.

2. Joseph and Mary had exhausted every human means within their reach in order to find their darling Son. They had visited the house of every friend and acquaintance that they had in the city. They had inquired high and low, but all in vain. They had prayed unceasingly, but apparently in vain. At last they turned their steps to the Temple. There they would beg for grace and strength to bear their crushing sorrow. Thus we, too, should act. Even if it is not the will of God to relieve us of the burden that weighs us down, yet at all events, as we kneel in His temple, we shall be strengthened to bear it patiently and with resignation.

3. Arrived at the Temple, they find at first no trace of Jesus. But at length they wander, as if by chance, into one of the courts, where a group of the doctors are assembled in earnest colloquy round a young Boy who is sitting in their midst. That Boy on whose lips the doctors are hanging in breathless interest, is none other than He whom they seek. What can have been the intensity of joy that deluged their hearts! Congratulate them, and pray that your sorrow may thus be turned into joy.

30.—Mary's Remonstrance.

1. Mary's first words on seeing her beloved Son once more were words of gentle remonstrance. "Son, why hast Thou done so to us?" So Mary spoke in accents full indeed of joy and gratitude, yet still echoing with the tone of sorrow that had filled her heart for the three days past, and in so speaking, she taught us that such words of loving remonstrance in time of suffering and desolation, so far from in any way displeasing Jesus, are what He likes to hear, because they are a mark of our love for Him, and of our consciousness that without His aid we never can bear up amid the sorrows that befall us.

2. "Thy Father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Why did Mary tell to Jesus what He already knew so well? Was it that she was ignorant that He could read the secrets of every heart, or that she thought that He had overlooked her anguish? All this she knew full well, but she knew also that Jesus loves that His friends should tell Him all their troubles. Do I show Him this mark of confidence?

3. Our Lady in the presence of the Jewish doctors calls St. Joseph the father of Jesus. How could she, when Jesus was the Son of the Most High? It was because St. Joseph was in every respect the true father of Jesus, save only that the Divine Infant was conceived in Mary's womb by the operation of the Holy Ghost. He exercised all the duties and rights of a parent, and was destined by Almighty God to pass as His Father among the unbelieving Jews. What must have been the unparalleled holiness of St. Joseph, who thus deserved to be put in the place of God Himself!

31.—Jesus' Reply.

1. The answer to Mary's question was an expression of wonder that Mary and Joseph should seek Him. "How is it that ye sought Me?" He did not really think it strange that they should look for Him whom they had lost, and the loss of whom turned the day into night for them. But He desired that we should regard it as no strange thing if sometimes He leaves us alone; for if He thus treated His holy Mother and His foster-father, it must be a mark of His love if He treats us as He treated them.

2. The reason Jesus gives for wondering that they sought Him, was, they must have known that His one aim in all that He did was to do His Father's work and carry out His Father's will. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Did you not know that if I remained in Jerusalem, it was because I was thus fulfilling the will of Him that sent Me? No other motive but this ever influences any action that I do, or any word that I speak. Can I take these words into my mouth, and declare the will of God to be my one and only motive?

3. Why did Jesus speak of His presence among the doctors as in a special sense "His Father's business?" Because He had been sent on earth to proclaim to men the Truth. "For this cause," He says to Pilate, "I came into the world, to bear witness to the Truth." All His servants have in one form or other the same mission. We all, if we are to do God's business, must sometimes proclaim to others the inspired truths that He has revealed to us. Do I do this boldly and yet prudently when occasion offers?

32.—The Youth of Jesus.

1. When Jesus returned with His parents to the cottage at Nazareth, we are expressly told that He was subject to them. This subjection to His earthly parents was in no way binding on Jesus Christ. He could not, in virtue of His Divine Nature, be bound to any subjection to any creature that He had made. But He took this subjection upon Himself, in order that we might learn that the highest kind of life on earth is one of voluntary subjection. It is this that gives to religious life its value in the sight of God. It is a reproduction of the life that the Son of God lived in the cottage at Nazareth.

2. Jesus lived in subjection during those years that witness the passage from boyhood to youth, and from youth to manhood. For most that time is one of a dangerous love of independence. How many a sorrowing mother grieves over the increasing tendency of her boy to resent her control, and laments those early days of his docile childhood. In those times of bitter disappointment, what can the poor mother do better than turn to that Mother whose Son was always a pattern of perfect obedience, and pray her to help and console her in those dark hours?

3. How many a son, when he looks back, finds among his most poignant regrets his unkindness and disobedience to his mother. How often he brought sorrow to her fond heart. How different his conduct to her from that of the Son of God to His Holy Mother. Pray God to forgive you if you have anything of this sort to reproach yourself with. Try and repair your unkindness by present tenderness, or by many prayers in her behalf.

33.—The Manhood of Jesus.

1. The subjection of Jesus did not cease when He arrived at the age of manhood. He seemed, f possible, to rejoice then even more than before in obeying His Holy Mother and St. Joseph. It was enough for Him to know that they wished anything of Him, and it was done without a moment of needless delay. Nay, He continually anticipated their desires, and in His thoughtful love carried them into effect unbidden. Is this the character of my obedience? or am I slow to carry out the wishes of those who have a claim upon me, even when I know them full well?

2. Jesus, in the fulness of His manhood, still worked on in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth. As long as Joseph lived, He acted as his assistant, worked under his directions; after his death He carried on for some time the business of His foster-father. Who would have guessed that this humble artisan was the coequal Son of God? Thus, O Jesus, Thou didst reverse the world's ideas. Grant that I may learn to despise none, but to see in the humblest Thy brethren and representatives.

3 Joseph's death left the cottage at Nazareth sadly desolate. Never was there so fond a spouse as Mary, never so affectionate a Son as Jesus. In proportion to their love was their grief at their common loss. Their knowledge that St. Joseph had passed to the bosom of Abraham did not restore the brightness of his presence to the cottage at Nazareth. Jesus and Mary can sympathize with the anguish of those whose longing desires go forth after one whom they have lost, even though they know that he is in Paradise.

34.—The Manual Labour of Nazareth.

1. What was the chief external occupation of Jesus at Nazareth? Not any employment that the world esteems honourable, but the menial work of a servant. By this He consecrated menial labour, and made it something high and honourable. Hence the Saints have always rejoiced in menial and humble tasks. Hence too we should learn to respect and never to look down upon those who have to labour with their hands.

2. How did Mary employ herself at Nazareth? Was it all prayer and contemplation? It is true that Mary's thoughts were always in Heaven, but this in no way interfered with the ordinary domestic duties of a poor woman who has to do all the household work herself. We fancy sometimes that we should be very holy if we gave all our time exclusively to prayer and other spiritual employments; but we should do better to remember that the way to sanctify ourselves is to do our work, however humble it may be, in the most perfect way possible, as Mary did at Nazareth.

3. How did Joseph spend his time at Nazareth? He, too, teaches the same lesson of the dignity of a life of humble toil. If we had visited Nazareth, and been told that this village carpenter was the future Patron of the Universal Church, would not a smile have been raised by a supposition so apparently absurd? How is it then that men look on the poor and humble as their natural inferiors, when their life corresponds so much more closely than any other to the life that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lived at Nazareth?

35.—The approaching Time of Separation.

1. At length the time drew near when Jesus was to leave the cottage at Nazareth. Mary knew well that it must come at last. It had been a shadow that from time to time had overshadowed the joy of their common life. Yet Mary had not allowed herself to dwell on the sorrow that she knew awaited her. She did not anticipate evils to come. So we, if we are wise, shall dwell with gratitude on the happy present, and shall not permit any troubles in the future to mar our peace.

2. Yet Mary knew that the time was not far off. The words of Jesus on the occasion of their finding Him in the Temple still echoed in her ears: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" She had laid them up in her heart when they were spoken, and had often trembled at the thought that ere long Jesus would go forth to the Ministry that He had come to exercise among the sons of men, and she would be left alone. For Mary the world was indeed a valley of tears. So it is for all who are very dear to God.

3. At the same time she longed for the very day that she dreaded so much. For Mary, in her unselfishness, desired eagerly the day when her Divine Son should begin His public labours of love and mercy among the sons of men. This is the true mark of unselfish love, to be willing to forfeit even the happiness of one we love, when he has some work to do whither God is calling him. Will my love for those who are dearest to me stand this test?

36.—Mary's Meditations.

1. "Mary kept all these words in her heart." Each word that Jesus spoke was indelibly printed on Mary's heart. All that He said was laid up as a precious treasure that was to guide her life, and to be ever present to her thoughts. No jewel was ever half as valuable in the eyes of its possessor as each word that Jesus spoke was to His holy Mother. Do I thus value the words of Jesus above gold and precious stones? How little pains I take to make my own His sacred words, recorded in the pages of Holy Scripture?

2. But Mary was not satisfied with merely treasuring up the words of Jesus. She also meditated on them day by day, finding in them continually a fresh fount of sweet refreshment for her holy soul and of food for her daily life. Do I make a similar use of the words of Jesus that I read, or hear in sermons, or do I merely read and listen for my own amusement, or perhaps even to criticize and find fault with what I hear, either with its matter, or with the manner in which it is said?

3. This habit of meditating on Jesus' words was one of Mary's chief means of progress, and advanced at such an unrivalled speed to the loftiest heights of sanctity. The practice of daily meditation on some pious thought, or some word of Jesus, is necessary to all who aim high. We shall never be the intimate friends of God without it. We must keep the sayings of Holy Scripture in our hearts, we must devote some time each day to meditating on them, if we are to be true children of Mary, and true lovers of her Son.

37.—Farewell to Nazareth.

1. At length the day dawned, when Mary had to part from Jesus. It is always hard for a mother to part from her only son, even when he goes forth to brilliant prospects of wealth and honour and renown; but what is it if she knows that he is destined to sorrow and disappointment, to ill-usage, to hardships of every kind, to persecution, imprisonment, torture, death? All this Mary knew was in store for her well-beloved Son. What must have been her unspeakable sorrow as she bade Him her fond farewell.

2. But this grief was at least consoled by His presence as long as He was with her. It was when He was gone that the storm of anguish burst in all its violence over her breaking heart. It was when she saw His place empty, and the music of His Divine words sounded no longer in her ears, that she realized how she was to share by her Compassion in the bitter sufferings of the Son of God. O Mary, who knowest so well what it is to have the heart torn by anguish, help us when we are shedding tears of agony over the dangers or the sufferings of one who is dear to us as life itself.

3. As Jesus turned His back on Nazareth, we may be sure that He shed many a tear of fond regret at the thought of the happy days He had spent in the cottage where He had dwelt for near thirty years with His Mother and St. Joseph. This remembrance of the past was joined to an intense grief at the thought He was causing Mary by leaving her alone. O Jesus, full of Divine pity, have pity on us now and in all our times of darkness and desolation.

THE SACRED PASSION.

MEDITATIONS FOR EVERY DAY IN LENT.

Preliminary Meditation.

How to Meditate on the Passion.

St. Bonaventure tells us that if we desire to meditate with fruit on the Passion of Jesus Christ, three conditions are necessary. Our meditation must be:

1. *Humble;* for the Passion is unlike anything else in the world, it is unfathomable to human reason—a bottomless ocean of mystery. Reason must bow its head and confess its inability to grasp the mysteries that even Faith sees only darkly and through a glass. The story of Christ's humiliation is to the proud a sealed book; they see nothing attractive in it. Christ suffering has no beauty that they should admire Him. I must therefore begin by praying for humility.

2. *Full of confidence;* since the Passion is the source of all our confidence. It is the proof of the exceeding love wherewith Christ loved us. How can I fear, with the sight before me of Christ suffering for love of me?

It is, too, a medicine for every possible evil, for every temptation, for every sin, whatever the malady of my soul, the Passion of Christ can cure it. At the foot of the Cross each mortal wound will be made whole.

3. *Persevering:* the beauty of the Passion does not appear all at once. The world considers it a degradation, the careless and the indifferent pass it by unmoved; even the faithful Christian scarcely penetrates beneath the surface of that Divine Mystery, unless he prays earnestly and continually to appreciate it, and frequently repeats his meditations on each mystery of the Passion. Only gradually and by degrees we are drawn by the sacred attractiveness of the Cross.

Ash Wednesday.

The Anticipation of the Passion.

Read St. Matthew xvi. 21; xvii. 21, 22.

1. From the first moment of His Incarnation our Blessed Lord had ever before His eyes the prospect of His approaching Agony and Death. It was present to Him, not vaguely and uncertainly, like pain and suffering to which men look forward, but vividly and distinctly, as at the actual time when He suffered. Never for a single moment was it absent from His thoughts. O wondrous love of our Incarnate God, Who thus employed His divine power to protract His sufferings by this continual prospect!

2. Yet in spite of this He was always cheerful and full of brightness and joy of heart. His coming Agony did not weigh Him down or depress Him. In spite of the bitterness of the chalice, of the unspeakable agony ever present to Him, no cloud overcast His brow, no weakness or dread was manifest to His Apostles, no thought of self interfered with His perfect sympathy for others. He was a pattern of divine unselfishness; the unselfish always forget their own troubles, and so can comfort and help others.

3. But our Blessed Lord not only was not cast down by the approaching Passion, He actually longed for it. "I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" His love for men was such that He rejoiced in the thought of suffering for us. How can I ever thank Him as I ought? How can I show my love for Him Who loved me with so great a love?

First Thursday in Lent.

The Preliminaries of the Passion.

Read St. Luke xxii. 1—6

1. During the first days of the week in which He suffered, our Blessed Lord had been teaching all day in the Temple. The assembled crowd had cried "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." It seemed as if He were going to be acknowledged by the voice of the people as the King of Israel. How deceptive are appearances! How often, when all seems going well and the cause of Christ about to triumph, some grievous disappointment is at hand!

2. Side by side with the enthusiasm of the people grew the rage and fury of the chief priests and scribes. Why did they thus hate Him who went about doing good? In their selfishness and cupidity, they feared lest He should interfere with their influence, and they should thus lose their position, their reputation, their gains. Pride and self-love blinded their eyes, and made them hate with a bitter hatred the Son of God. Am I not sometimes blinded by like feelings? filled with unjust dislike of others because they seem to interfere with my influence or my personal interests?

3. The chief priests had a great advantage in the fact that in the little company that surrounded Jesus there was a traitor. Judas, impelled by avarice, had been first a thief, and then had made overtures to betray his Master. O fatal influence of money to harden the heart of man! How careful must I be not to set my heart on any earthly possessions, since nothing has a more deadly power than this to separate me from the love of Jesus!

First Friday in Lent.

The Supper in Simon's House.

Read St. Mark xiv. 3—11.

1. The supper in Simon's house was remarkable for St. Mary Magdalene's act of devotion to our Divine Lord. She brought an alabaster box of ointment of precious spikenard, and poured it on His Head as He sat at table. Her gift was very pleasing to our Lord for three reasons: (*a*) she gave of her best; (*b*) she gave out of pure love; (*c*) she gave in presence of the assembled guests, fearlessly and knowing that men would ridicule and blame her. Are the gifts I give to God marked by generosity, supernatural love, absence of all human respect?

2. Some of those present, instigated by Judas, began to criticise what they regarded as waste. They had indignation within themselves and showed it in words. They veiled their grumbling under show of charity to the poor. This was very displeasing to Jesus. He hates the spirit that finds fault and criticises and condemns, and all the more when it hides itself under the cloak of virtue. Yet is not this spirit strong in me?

3. Notice the gratitude of Jesus. A little box of ointment poured on His Head earns for the donor a commemoration of her gift wherever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world. And not only this: it obtains for her also many graces on earth and great glory in Heaven. There is no one who is so grateful as Jesus Christ: no one who will reward with such divine generosity everything done from love to Him. Nothing will be forgotten, nothing is too small to be noticed and richly recompensed by Him.

First Saturday in Lent.

The Eating of the Paschal Lamb.

Read St. Luke xxii. 14—18.

Our Blessed Lord, before He suffered, celebrated the Jewish rite which above all the rest foreshadowed His own sacred sufferings. The paschal lamb was an exact type of Him, the Lamb of God Who taketh away the sins of the world.

1. The paschal lamb was the means employed by Almighty God to deliver His people from Egypt. It was the sprinkling of its blood on the posts of the door which caused the avenging angel to pass by and leave the inmates unharmed. So the Blood of Jesus Christ sprinkled on our souls, in the Sacraments and when we make an act of contrition, saves us from the vengeance that would otherwise fall upon us. O Jesus! sprinkle me with one drop of Thy precious Blood, and I shall be free from sin.

2. The paschal lamb had to be drained of the last drop of its blood. So the Lamb of God shed for us the last drop of His precious Blood. He was not satisfied with merely giving His life for us, but He must needs endure all the intense agony, the burning thirst which came of this draining of His whole Body for love of us. How can I ever thank Him as I ought?

3. The lamb endures uncomplainingly. It never murmurs against its lot, or struggles against those who lead it here and there; unlike the filthy swine, who grunt and grumble at every attempt to control them. None was ever so submissive as the Lamb of God. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it." Can I echo these words?

The First Sunday in Lent.

Jesus' Desire for His Sufferings.

Read St. Luke xii. 49, 50.

1. How are we to account for Christ's desire to suffer? Human nature shrinks from suffering and dreads it, and none of the sons of men was ever so sensitive as He, or had sufferings to look forward to in any way comparable to His. Yet in spite of this, Christ longed for His sufferings. O wondrous love, that not only suffered for us, but longed for the time when His Passion should come!

2. Was it the suffering in itself for which Christ longed? Impossible. It was for the result of that suffering, for the joy that was set before Him, that He endured the Cross and despised the shame. Even Christ could not work without the prospect of some reward. So we should encourage ourselves with the thought of the glorious recompense God will give to all who suffer for Him, and who unite their sufferings to the sacred sufferings of the Son of God.

3. But what sort of reward was that to which the Son of God looked forward? It was no selfish reward. It was the pure, unselfish joy of seeing others happy, of knowing that by all He was to endure millions of mankind would be freed from the eternal misery of Hell, and raised to the eternal and unspeakable joy of the Beatific Vision. He knew that it was by sufferings that graces must be won for others. This lesson, too, the saints learned from their Master. How have I learned it? Do I recognize the necessity, the dignity, the happiness of suffering?

Monday after the First Sunday in Lent.

The Washing of the Feet.

Read St. John xiii. 2—20.

1. When the paschal supper was finished our Lord rose from table and laid aside His upper garment; and girding Himself with a towel, He filled a basin with water and went round from one to another of the Apostles, washing with His sacred Hands the feet of each. This act was intended to teach us the happiness of performing menial services for those around us. To wait on others, especially on our inferiors, for Christ's sake, is far more honourable than to be waited on by them; to make ourselves the servants of others is far more noble than to be served by them. Is this the principle on which I act?

2. In this act were combined the two virtues which are most prominent in our Lord's life on earth—*charity* and *humility*. Charity takes a pleasure in everything that promotes the happiness or the comfort of our fellow-men because they are the brethren of Christ. Humility takes a pleasure in whatever puts us in an inferior position. How sadly wanting I am in these virtues! I dislike charity if it costs me anything, and I positively hate to be humbled, to be despised by men.

3. Yet Christ's words are true: "The disciple is not greater than his master." If our Divine Master was glorious in the sight of the angels as He stooped to wash the Apostles' feet, our road to glory must be by stooping, by ministering in all humility to others. We never can be as great as our Master. We must take care lest our selfishness and pride place us in direct contrast with the Son of God.

Tuesday after the First Sunday in Lent.

The Institution of the Blessed Eucharist.

Read St. Luke xxii. 19, 20.

1. St. Paul tells us with pointed emphasis that it was on the very night in which He was betrayed that our Lord instituted the Mystery of mysteries, the Sacrament of His Love. It was worthy of His divine generosity to choose the occasion when He was to be outraged, insulted, betrayed, scourged, and crucified, to invent this wondrous Sacrament of Love. To forgive is always generous, but what shall we say of the generosity of One who not only forgives the most horrible insults and cruelty, but chooses the very day on which He is to suffer them for giving to His enemies a gift compared with which all other gifts are small and insignificant—a gift, too, which is none other than Himself?

2. What is the primary end of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist? Our Lord Himself tells us in the words: "Do this in commemoration of Me." It is for the sake of putting us in mind of His Sacred Passion that He gives Himself to us, and we, His brethren, for whom He died, may not forget Him. He loved us so dearly—He loves us still so dearly—that He cannot bear to be absent from our thoughts; and for this end He invented this means of representing His Passion to us as long as the world should last.

3. But the Blessed Eucharist is more than a commemoration of the Sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same Sacrifice continued: the same Priest, the same Victim, only the manner of offering changed. Christ is still slain each time Holy Mass is said; the oblation on the Cross is an eternal oblation for the sins of the whole world.

Wednesday after the First Sunday in Lent.

The Farewell Discourse of Jesus.

Read St. John xiv. 1—3, 27—31.

1. Our Lord's farewell to His Apostles begins and ends with words of encouragement. He knew the importance of courage and confidence, and that without these they would never do great things for God. He knew, too, how liable all men are to be discouraged and cast down when troubles and trials arise; how hard it is to struggle on when all seems dark around. To us as well as to the Twelve He says: "Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God; believe also in Me." Why do not we believe more in Christ, trust Him more, appeal more to Him in times of darkness? He will always have a word of comfort for us. "Let not your heart be troubled. I go to prepare a place for you."

2. Amid all the troubles that our Lord foretells to His Apostles, He promises them one gift that will enable them to rise above all their difficulties and all their sorrows. He promises to leave with them peace. What gift in the world is there which is like this? If we are at peace, we can bid defiance to all our foes; if we are not at peace, we might be lords of the universe, yet we should be miserable. No wonder we pray in holy Mass, *Dona nobis pacem*—Give us peace.

3. The peace our Lord promises is *His* peace; "My peace I give unto you." What sort of peace is this? It is the peace He enjoyed all through His life—the peace of perfect union of His will with God's. If we are thus united to God by perfect resignation, we too shall have unalterable and eternal peace.

Thursday after the First Sunday in Lent

On the Road to Gethsemani.

Read St. Mark xiv. 26—34.

1. After singing one of the paschal hymns, our Lord and His Apostles went forth to the Garden of Gethsemani. On the way a strange sorrow spread over the countenance of Jesus. His unfailing cheerfulness forsook Him. His disciples wondered at the sudden change. It was the shadow of His Sacred Passion which fell upon Him, the beginning of the black darkness which was to envelope His Sacred Heart. When the shadow of desolation falls on me, may I remember Thee, O Lord, thus downcast on the road to Gethsemani!

2. In mournful words our Lord addresses the Apostles: "You will all be scandalized in My regard this night. You will all fly like cowards when the danger comes. One of you will betray Me, another will deny Me thrice, all will forsake Me." How this thought pierced with anguish the sensitive Heart of Jesus! Of all who for three years had been His chosen friends and companions, who had seen His miracles and listened to His divine words, not one would be found faithful. My God, how often have I been found unfaithful to Thee!

3. At length our Lord's bitter sorrow breaks out in words still more mournful: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." The darkness which was gathering round Him was even then like the darkness of death. He began to fear and to be very heavy. He could hardly endure the misery which even then began to fall on Him. Pray for sympathy with Jesus, and the power of appreciating a little the divine love which undertook all this for your sake.

Friday after the First Sunday in Lent.

The Sacred Agony in the Garden.

Read St. Matthew xxvi. 30—40.

1. During the Agony in the Garden our Lord anticipated all the coming agony of His Passion. He allowed His human Soul to feel in all its intensity each detail of the unspeakable suffering that was now close at hand. Hitherto it had indeed been distinctly present to Him, but now it seemed to take possession of His own Soul. Now it was a mortal fear, resulting from a clear, vivid realization of all that He had to endure. When darkness invades our souls, we should remember that none is like the deep, black darkness that spread over the Sacred Soul of Jesus.

2. What relief did Jesus seek in this agony of terror that had come over Him? The relief of prayer. He knew that in all desolation and distress the best plan, the only plan, is to throw ourselves upon the mercy of God. There is no imperfection in asking to be delivered from something that we can scarcely endure, whether present agony or the anticipation of it, else Christ would not have prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me!" In our darkest hours, we can at least repeat these sacred words that were spoken as a pattern to us.

3. Yet we must remember the conclusion of the prayer, the act of resignation, which leaves all in the hands of God. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" These words, spoken from our hearts, will always give us strength to bear what seems unbearable, and will take the bitterness out of our pains.

Saturday after the First Sunday in Lent.

The Intensity of the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Mark xiv. 32—42.

If it is difficult to suffer, it is far more difficult to suffer willingly for those who show no gratitude in return for what we endure for them. But most difficult, nay, impossible, save to one who shares the divine charity of the Son of God, to suffer for those who requite love with hatred, the favours won for them by outrages and insults. It was this that crushed to the earth the Son of God. Alas! how ungrateful I am to Him!

2. During His Sacred Agony He took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. Not in a general way, but individually, so that each and every sin, from the first sin of Adam to the last that shall be committed on the eve of the Judgment, was present before him: and not only present, but each added its own pang. The great black cloud which passed before His Soul contained each sin of each individual man, woman, and child, and Christ suffered for each. What a frightful thing it must be to commit deliberately even the least sin, if thereby we add fresh pain to the Agony of Jesus!

3. It was in this way that "He was made sin for us," *i.e.*, He identified Himself with sin as far as it was possible for the Immaculate Lamb of God. He took upon Him all the effects of sin except those which necessarily belong to him who is guilty of the act of sin. All the darkness, all the gloom, the despondency, the loss of God, the feeling of hopelessness, the terror, which arise from sin, inundated His Sacred Soul. Thus it was that He saved me from the punishment my sins deserved. Oh my Jesus! how can I ever thank Thee as I ought?

The Second Sunday in Lent.

The Help for the Saints in the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Matthew xxvi. 40—44.

1. Our Blessed Lord was not satisfied with taking upon Himself the sins of the world; in His divine mercy and compassion He added to this a further sacrifice of Himself. He also took upon Himself all the sufferings of the just, and especially all that His saints and martyrs would have to suffer for Him. He endured beforehand the thousand forms of agony to which they would be subjected for His sake. Not only would He in His love and mercy redeem them, but "He bore their infirmities and carried their sorrows." What sufficient thanks can we show to Him for His unbounded goodness?

2. This it is which enabled the martyrs to despise their torments, and made the Apostles rejoice to suffer shame for His sake. This it is which makes tolerable anguish which otherwise would be intolerable; for if it be borne patiently for love of Christ, He has already in Himself, if not exhausted its bitterness, at least taken the main part of it on Himself. Every pang, every struggle, every throb of agony which should fall to the lot of His servants till the end of the world, He made His own for their relief.

3. For this reason we are taught to unite our sufferings with those of our Lord; for what else does this mean except that He desires to share them with us? In point of fact, the more we do, the more we bear our troubles with a supernatural motive, the lighter they will become, or rather the greater will be our power and willingness to bear them. I will be more resigned, more patient, for Christ's sake; to Him I will offer all my sufferings and unite them o His.

Monday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

The Consolations of the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Luke xxii. 40—46.

1. No words can tell, no human heart can conceive, the intensity of the sacred Agony of Jesus. It would have crushed Him out of His very life had He not by means of His Divinity supported His Sacred Humanity, and so enabled it to suffer more. See Him pale, haggard, scarce to be recognized in His abasement and His terror! See the sweat of blood pouring from His sacred Limbs! Can this be the well-beloved Son of God? My God, make me more contrite at the thought that I have taken part in bringing Thee to this.

2. But He was not without consolation in His Agony. An Angel was sent to comfort Him, to present before His vision the innumerable company of the saints won by His precious Blood. He saw their joy and happiness to be won by His Sacred Passion, by the labour of His Soul, and seeing it He was satisfied to bear it all. O pure, unselfish joy! O joy surpassing all other joys! The joy of seeing others happy was the promised reward which supported Jesus in His Agony.

3. But He had a still greater and stronger support than this. He beheld the honour and glory that would accrue to His Eternal Father. He saw that all the glory God would reap from His works would be as nothing in comparison with this greatest work to be wrought by His Eternal Son, and seeing this He was satisfied, and more than satisfied. In the head of the Book it is written of Him: "Behold, I come to do Thy will, O my God. I am content to do it." Have I the glory of God at heart as the first and foremost motive of my actions?

Tuesday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

The Sequel of the Sacred Agony.

Read St. Mark xiv. 41, 42.

1. At length our Lord's mental agony in the Garden was over; He had accepted the chalice which His Heavenly Father had given Him to drink. Now He is no longer sad and downcast, but He returns to His Apostles full of vigour and courage. He encounters His Passion almost with eagerness. This is always the result of a perfect submission to the will of God and absolute confidence in Him. God will always give us the courage to meet every trial, and when the time comes He will impart strength and force and lightheartedness that make it easy to face the trial.

2. Yet this change has another cause. It was won by prayer; or, rather, our Lord as our Divine example imparted for our sakes to His human nature grace such as earnest prayer alone can obtain for men from God. This is the secret of all spiritual victories; all are won by persevering prayer. Prayer changes the poor timid, frightened, shrinking soul to one brave and courageous and ready to do great things for God. Without prayer we are sure to fail. Am I earnest in prayer?

3. We observe, too, that it was not merely prayer, but *repeated* prayer—the same words over and over again, the same entreaty to be spared, joined to the same act of resignation. We sometimes say we cannot pray, but at least we can repeat over and over again some prayer for mercy and for help. Our repetitions will be not vain repetitions, but will bring certain relief from Him who encourages us to importunity in prayer.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

The Betrayal of Jesus.

Read St. Matt. xxvi. 47—50.

1. As soon as Jesus had for the third time roused the Apostles from their slumber, the tramp of approaching soldiery is heard, and presently a band is seen escorted by the Pharisees and ancients, and headed by one who acts as their guide. Who is it who has pointed out Christ to His foes? Alas! it is none other than the traitor Judas; one of the chosen Twelve who had lived for three years in familiar intercourse with Jesus, listened to His words of grace, seen His acts of love and mercy. If Judas fell so low, I too am in continual danger. How awful a thing it would be if I too were to turn traitor to Jesus!

2. Our Lord does not shrink away from Judas as we do from those who we think have treated us ill. On the contrary, He advances to meet him with words of friendship, in spite of the deadly wrong He had received. How is it we are so unforgiving, so slow to make friendly advances, so ready to wrap ourselves up in our offended dignity? It is because we are so ungenerous, so petty, so mean, so unlike to Jesus.

3. Jesus still loved Judas, sought to win Judas, strove by words of gentle remonstrance to bring him to a sense of his wickedness before it was too late. "Whereunto, friend, art thou come?" He calls this miserable wretch His friend. Jesus meant what He said; for He is the friend of sinners, even the greatest. He then is my friend, so why should I fear?

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

The Apprehension of Jesus.

Read St. John xviii. 2—11.

1. When Judas had given to his Master the traitor's kiss, our Lord, knowing that His hour was come, boldly advanced to meet His enemies, and told them that He was Jesus of Nazareth. At this word they went backward and fell to the ground. If this was the result of our Lord's presenting Himself to them in His humiliation and abasement, what will be the terror and the dread of sinners when He comes again in all His glory? O my God, grant that I may have no sin upon my soul, no debt still to pay when I appear before the judgment-seat of Christ!

2. The soldiers then advanced to seize Jesus. St. Peter, with impetuous courage and loyalty, draws his sword and attacks the servants of the High Priest, and in the affray cuts off the ear of one of them. But our Lord checks him, and bids him put up his sword into the scabbard. His loyalty was natural, not supernatural, and it did not endure long in the face of danger. Natural motives, however good, will not serve the cause of God.

3. When our Lord was in the hands of His enemies, all the Apostles forsook Him and fled. Not one was found to remain by His side in His abandonment. It was the will of God that He should suffer *alone*. "I looked about and there was none to help; I sought, and there was none to give aid." Christ then suffered alone, and He can sympathize with that loneliness in suffering which adds so much to its bitterness.

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

Jesus led away Captive.

Read St. John xviii. 12, 13.

1. The chief priests and Pharisees had brought with them a coil of rope with which they bound tightly the Sacred Hands of Jesus, and He was led away like a lamb going to the slaughter. This is the beginning of the apparent powerlessness of Jesus. He who before bid defiance to His enemies, put them to the rout by word and work, now seems unable to resist them, feeble and helpless in their hands. Yet under this apparent weakness was hidden a Divine force; nay, it was this very weakness which was the means of conquering the whole world.

2. The officers tied the Hands of Jesus, so that He could no longer lay them upon the sick and the afflicted, to heal their diseases and their miseries. So we too tie the Hands of Jesus by bands far more fatal, in hindering His power to heal the sickness of our soul. When we reject His graces and turn a deaf ear to His counsel, we render Him powerless to assist us; He cannot bestow upon us the blessings He delights to impart; our obstinacy has tied His Hands, so that He cannot help us as He would.

3. Often in our desire to work for others we find our hands tied. Something hinders our charitable designs; some hostile influence renders us apparently powerless. Our prayers seem to avail nothing; our kind acts are rejected; we seem to do the wrong thing when trying our best to do what is right. Yet we must not repine; we are only treading in our Master's steps. The very suffering entailed in this is a sure means of earning the graces we desire.

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

In the House of Annas.

Read St. John xviii. 19—24.

1. Try to picture the scene; watch the persons, listen to their words, observe their actions. Annas, a cunning, bitter, cynical old man, delighted to find his enemy in his power; the Pharisees crowding round in eager excitement, the false witnesses trying to concoct a plausible story, and in the midst Jesus, sorrowful, bleeding, exhausted, yet calm and full of dignity. Hear the insulting questions of Annas, the derisive jeers of the Pharisees, the shouts of the mob, the firm, quiet, gentle words of Jesus. See the angry, eager gestures of the enemies of Christ, the assumed indignation of the judge, the cruel blow struck by the mailed hand of the soldier on the Face of Jesus, causing the blood to flow from His Sacred Mouth.

2. Christ received this blow upon His Face to atone for our sins of the tongue, for the wicked words, the censorious words, the uncharitable words, the impure words that too often proceed from our mouth. Grant, O Lord, that I may remember Thee suffering this cruel blow, and so may learn to hate my sins of the tongue that inflicted it upon Thee.

3. Our Lord desired to teach us another lesson, viz., to bear with patience and gentleness all outrage and unkindness, all reproaches and ill-usage, and especially such as we endure for His sake. "Blessed are ye," He says, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake." But we must take care to bear it *for Christ's sake*, and for love of Him, if we would earn the blessing

The Third Sunday in Lent.

In the Palace of Caiaphas.

Read St. Mark xiv. 55—64.

1. From the house of Annas, Jesus was dragged to the palace of Caiaphas the High Priest. Notice the bustle and activity that prevail: the chief priests and council searching everywhere for a show of evidence; messengers sent to and fro; bribes offered, all the most worthless summoned to testify against Him. This is always the way: the wicked so much more active in fighting against God than the good in fighting in His behalf. Our Lord's disciples and friends are doing nothing, while His enemies are seeking to destroy Him. When I look at myself, how little I have done, how little I do now, for the interests of Jesus!

2. The false witnesses who came forward had a certain show of truth. The words they quoted against Him were really spoken. They had learned the ways of their master the devil; Satan, when he deceives, always mixes up a large element of truth with his deceits. This is why we should never argue with him, for he can represent what is false and unlawful as true and right, if once we listen, by bringing into prominence the element of truth it contains.

3. These false witnesses, in spite of their cunning, could not agree together, but contradicted one another. It is one of the certain tests of error, that it is inconsistent and self-contradictory; the city of confusion and the home of strife always thus betrays its imposture. Jarring discord is the mark of the foes of Christ; peace and concord are the privilege of those who are on His side. How I should thank God that He has caused me to dwell in the City of Truth, the Church of the Living God!

Monday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

The Condemnation of Christ.

Read St. Mark xiv. 60—64.

1. In the midst of the false witnesses and their lying testimony Jesus remains silent. The High Priest, angry and impatient, urges Him to reply: "Answerest Thou nothing to the things which these witness against Thee?" Still Jesus answers not a word. How different from our eager anxiety to answer every accusation and every word of blame! How much better if we could hold our peace after the example of Jesus!

2. At length the High Priest rises and asks a direct question; nay, he summons Christ in the name of God to declare the truth: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." Ordered by authority, Jesus at once says: "I am; and one day I shall come in all the power of God that is now entrusted to you as the High Priest of God." Another lesson for us. We must obey authority even where he who carries it shamefully abuses it; for those in authority, like Caiaphas, speak in their official capacity as in the place of God.

3. When Christ declares Himself to be the Son of God, the High Priest and the council rise indignantly to protest against such blasphemy. In this they are the type of modern heretics, who accuse the Church of God and the Vicar of Christ of blasphemously usurping divine prerogatives. Pride and jealousy and self-love so blinded the eyes of the Sanhedrim that they called good evil, and evil good; condemned the Son of God to death because He told them the truth. My God, preserve me from ever being thus blinded by sin!

Tuesday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

St. Peter's Denial of Jesus.

Read St. Luke xxii. 55—62.

1. What was the secret of Peter's miserable fall? He was brave and generous, and loved Our Lord dearly. Yet through human respect and fear, he denied all knowledge of Him. The reason why he fell was that he trusted in himself and his natural qualities instead of in God. In the spiritual warfare natural courage and generosity avail not. He who does not rely upon God alone is sure to fall When dangers are imminent he loses heart, and then all goes wrong.

2. St. Peter had not yet learned that natural impulse as a motive of action is sure to lead man astray. It never avails before God. Its excellence, whatever it may be, only avails in the things of this world, and even there it is a dangerous and untrustworthy motive. In things divine it is the road to ruin. We must never be led by impulse if we are to be safe. We must do more; we must turn our thoughts to God, and seek a divine impulse, an inspiration from Heaven, if we are to remain faithful and avoid frequent faults.

3. St. Peter had neglected prayer. Our Lord had expressly warned him to watch and pray, and he had allowed himself to sleep while Christ was suffering His Sacred Agony. True, he was weary and his eyes were heavy, but still he could have made the attempt. It might have seemed an unsatisfactory prayer, yet it would have saved Peter from his fall. He might have used vocal prayers and repeated the same words, like our Lord did. Learn from this that mere struggle against heaviness is very pleasing to God.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

St. Peter's Repentance.

Read St. Luke xxii. 55—62.

1. St. Peter had thrice denied his Master, and the third time with oaths and curses. He was ashamed of Christ, afraid to own himself a servant of Christ, and all because of a woman's jeering tongue. As I look over my life, how many times there have been when I have been faithless as Peter was! I have not boldly spoken out as I ought. I have perhaps taken part in talk hateful to my Lord and Master. I have been ashamed to run counter to uncharitable or evil conversation, though I knew well enough that it was sinful.

2. After the third denial the cock crew, and at the same time our Lord turned and looked on Peter. It was at the moment when He was being dragged from the tribunal to the servant's room, amid the jeers and mockery of the soldiers. All this time St. Peter had been present to His thoughts, amid all the outrages and insults; and not St. Peter alone, but all who, though not at heart disloyal, nevertheless fall through weakness into sin. Remember me, O Lord, when I am in danger of falling, and when Satan desires to have me that he may riddle me as wheat.

3. That look pierced the heart of St. Peter with a keen pang of shame and sorrow and repentance. How could he have been faithless to the Lord Whom he loved, and for Whom he had joyfully given up all! At once he made his way out of the hall, and with tears of anguish begged for pardon. Those tears were not unmixed with the sweet consolation of knowing that he was forgiven, and with a firm resolution not to let this fall discourage him. Here is a model for me when I have sinned.

Thursday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

Jesus in the Guard-room of Caiaphas.

Read St. Luke xxii. 63—65.

1. After our Lord had been condemned to death, the Sanhedrim rose, and He was handed over for custody during the night to the soldiers and servants, who, taking the cue from their masters, treated their prisoner with every kind of brutal ill-usage. They tied a dirty rag over His Face, and struck Him on the Face, challenging Him at the same time to show His Divine power by saying the name of the striker. When He was silent, they mocked and jeered at Him, and at last they spat their filthy spittle in His Sacred Face. O my Lord, King of heaven and earth, how couldst Thou suffer Thy Divine Majesty to be outraged by these wretches?

2. Yet our Lord was never more glorious than in the midst of His degradation and contempt. If at His baptism He was the beloved Son of God in whom He was well pleased, much more now. Each blow, each gibe, each insult added to the glory of His Sacred Humanity to all eternity. Truly then does St. Peter say: "If you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be blessed." Wisely did the Apostles count it joy to suffer shame for His sake. My God, I know it is so; but do I act on this principle, and rejoice in the reproaches and contempt that fall to my lot?

3. What did Christ specially atone for in the guard-room? For all the filthy words men speak, for all the obscene jests, for all the mockery of holy things, for all the angry, cruel, uncharitable words. Alas, my Jesus! have I not taken part in these insults poured upon Thee?

Friday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

Jesus is dragged before Pilate.

Read St. Luke xxii. 66—70; xxiii. 1.

1. At daybreak the council assembled, and Jesus was again brought before them and questioned again. The sentence of death passed the night before was confirmed. The whole multitude then hastened to Pilate with their prisoner, that they might obtain from the Roman governor the ratification of the sentence which they could not carry out themselves. They were resolved to have His life—anything to be rid of Him. How strange it seems that they should so hate Him without a cause! Yet it is ever so: men who are proud and covetous and selfish instinctively hate the truth. This is why there prevails all over the world such a deadly enmity to the Church of Christ.

2. To wreak their vengeance, the Pharisees and ancients were ready to rise with the sun. How active men are in promoting worldly interests and criminal designs! So much more active than in working for God and for Heaven. Might I not contrive to rise a little earlier or more punctually, so as to do something to please our Lord before I begin my ordinary work? At least I might think of Him, and offer my heart and my life to Him!

3. The Jews actually delivered over one of their own sacred nation to their enemies and oppressors, the Romans. No means are too base to get rid of their enemy. How much unreasoning malice I have shown against those whom I disliked or who interfered with my selfish interests, perhaps against those who are not only brethren of Christ, but very dear to Him?

Saturday after the Third Sunday in Lent.

Judas' Repentance.

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 3—16.

1. When Judas heard the unanimous voice of the chief priests and ancients, declaring that Jesus was guilty of death, his soul was filled with a black remorse that made his life intolerable. How he hated the miserable pieces of silver for which he had sold his Master! How he hated himself! The sweetness and gentleness of Christ came vividly before him, and only added to his misery. How bitterly he repented his folly! At least he would rid himself of the accursed money, and declare his guilt. But he had gone too far. He had refused so often to listen to the voice of Jesus that now his hardened heart refused to melt. What a warning to all who turn a deaf ear to the voice of conscience!

2. Yet he might have been forgiven even now if he had thrown himself at Jesus' Feet, and begged for pardon. But this he would not do. His repentance was a hopeless, black remorse—no element of hope or love or humble sorrow. It was the repentance of the lost in Hell, who cry, "Fools that we were!" but yet will not, cannot humble themselves to cry for mercy.

3. How miserable Judas had been from the first! Had those pilfered grains in early days brought him solid satisfaction? Had he been happy when he sacrificed his Master's interests to his own? Are we happy when we knowingly prefer our own selfish interests to those of Christ? Sin and misery are twin sisters. My God, may I never wilfully betray Thy interests to my own pleasure or gain!

The Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus before Pilate.

Read St. John xviii. 28—40.

1. Pilate was at first inclined to look with contempt on the charge brought against Christ of setting Himself up as King of the Jews. But he soon changed his tone. He was astonished at our Lord's silence and reserve. His calm dignity made a deep impression on him. How few there are who imitate Christ in this. Our babbling tongues pour forth so many foolish and ill-considered words. Learn of Jesus the dignity of timely silence.

2. Yet Jesus spoke when occasion required, He said enough to Pilate to convince him not only of His innocence, but of His claim to be king. Pilate was half-inclined to listen. He could not help recognizing in some degree the divine beauty of the Son of God amid all His humiliations. So the Catholic Church manifests herself to the world in a way that is sufficient to attract men of good will. There are few who have not the chance of recognizing her claims. Her beauty even in her humiliations and amid the sins of men shines forth as did the beauty of her Divine Spouse.

3. Pilate's long experience tells him plainly enough that the Jews are all wrong and Christ is right. His practised eye detects the malice of the Jews, their hatred of their victim, their selfishness and unscrupulous cruelty. He longs to release Christ; he knows he ought to do so, but he fears the Jews, lest he be reported as favouring revolt. Human respect overcomes his convictions, and he has not the courage to set Jesus free. How fatal is cowardice in things divine!

Monday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus before Herod.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 7—12.

1. When Pilate found that the Jews were determined on the death of Jesus, he tried to get rid of the responsibility by sending Him to Herod. Herod rejoiced to see Him. In his vanity he expected that our Lord would be glad to conciliate him by performing some miracle in his presence. Vain expectation! It is only for the humble and pure of heart that our Lord works miracles. Yet I expect Him to work for me, proud and selfish as I am, miracles of grace, to enable me to easily overcome long-rooted faults, to attain a spirit of prayer and close union with Him. How can I hope for this while I am so full of the worldly spirit of Herod?

2. Our Lord was ready enough to speak to Pilate, and even to Caiaphas; but for Herod He had not a word. There is something terrible in this silence in the presence of the sensual, hardened reprobate. There is something in a sensual life that shuts the ears of men so that the whispers of grace never seem to reach them. If I want our Lord to speak to me, the first thing is to see that I do not indulge my body inordinately.

3. Herod was also the incarnation of self-satisfied worldliness. He was munificent, popular, successful; but he was hateful in God's sight, and rejected by Him, so that our Lord showed an aversion to him that He showed to none else. What a lesson for us! The reprobate Herod surrounded by flatterers and admirers; the Eternal Wisdom of God dressed in a fool's dress and treated as an idiot!

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Barabbas or Jesus?

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 15—22.

1. Before Pilate sent our Lord to Herod, he had already sought to take occasion to release Him from the custom of setting free at the Pasch some notable prisoner. In order to secure success he had proposed, as an alternative, a noted murderer named Barabbas. To his astonishment, the name of Barabbas had at once been taken up by the multitude. It was not that they loved Barabbas, but they hated Christ. So wretched men now choose what they know is evil, simply because they hate God. They cannot bear the idea of submission. They long to get God out of the way, as the Jews desired to be rid of Christ.

2. The multitude shouted for Barabbas because the chief priests urged them to it. It was the rulers, the ancients, who were the real murderers of Christ; the ignorant mob did but follow their leaders. What a responsibility it is to be in a position of authority! What an account those who rule will have to give of those subject to them!

3. When Christ returned from the palace of Herod, clad in the fool's garment, Pilate made one more attempt to get Him released. It was a fresh compromise with his conscience, and, like all such compromises, only brought fresh insults on the Son of God. Again the shout rose for Barabbas to be set free, and Christ to be crucified. O Pilate! why not listen to the whisper within you, and set the Just Man free at any risk! My God, save me from cowardly compromises and dallying with conscience.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.
The Scourging.

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 27—30.

1. When the Jews had shouted for Barabbas, and threatened Pilate to denounce him as disloyal to Rome if he released Jesus, the Governor made one more attempt to save the life of Christ. He ordered Him to be severely scourged, hoping thereby to move the pity of the Jews. Vain attempt at a fresh compromise with his conscience! Pilate only involved himself in deeper guilt, and Christ in a greater agony of suffering. Nothing ever succeeds except a bold, fearless obedience to God's holy inspirations.

2. Our Lord is handed over to the scourgers, who strip Him naked and then begin their impious barbarity. Blow succeeds blow from their many lashed, iron-pointed scourges. First His sacred Flesh becomes red and swollen under the stripes; then the Blood begins to flow; then the iron points lacerate and tear His delicate Body until it is one great wound. Listen as He piteously moans under the anguish! See Him masked in blood! O my Jesus, what must be Thy love to endure this for me!

3. At length the executioners cut the cords, and Christ falls heavily in a pool of His own Blood. What has brought the King of Heaven to this condition of abject misery? It is the sins of men, especially the sinful indulgence of the body. It was to atone for sins of luxury and impurity and drunkenness that the spotless Lamb of God was thus tortured. Alas! how often have I been indulgent to my body! How have I yielded to the cravings of sense!

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

The Crowning with Thorns.

Read St. Mark xv. 16, 17.

1. Our Lord was covered with a scarlet cloak and crowned with Thorns as a travesty or caricature of worldly honour. He desired to exhibit it in its true light. The farce played by the soldiers was in truth no farce, but a reality. It was intended to show how empty and contemptible is all earthly glory. It is worth no more than the mock-respect of the ruffians who bowed the knee by way of insult to Jesus. O Lord, by that mockery of honour Thou didst undergo, grant that I may esteem numan honour at its true value.

2. Watch the soldiers at their cruel sport. The crown upon the Head of Jesus is plaited of briars, whose long thorns pierce His sacred forehead as they press it down upon Him; the drops of Blood and mingled tears blind His Eyes. One by one they pass before Him and bow the knee, and then O shame! they spit in His Sacred Face, that Face before which angels and archangels fall in prostrate homage. O Lord, in return for those insults Thou didst endure, I will always bow before Thee in the Blessed Sacrament with reverent love and adoration; I will seek to wipe the drops of Blood from Thine Eyes by denying myself the free indulgence of my senses even in lawful things.

3. What were the sins for which Christ specially atoned in the crowning with thorns? Evil thoughts and imaginations, uncharitable thoughts, proud thoughts, impure thoughts. It was these rather than the thorns which pierced His Sacred Head, and filled His Eyes with tears of sorrow and of blood.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

Ecce Homo.

Read St. John xix. 4—6.

1. The scourging and crowning with thorns have brought the Son of God to a condition pitiable to contemplate. We have seen Him, and there is no sightliness in Him that we should desire Him. Pity, contempt, horror, disgust, indignation, are mingled in the hearts of those who behold Him. He is indeed a worm and not a man—He, the fairest among ten thousand! He, the sinless Lamb of God! O how frightful must sin be, if it can work such havoc even in the Sacred Person of the Son of God!

2. The sin that did this work, moreover, was the sin of others, not His own. It was something external to Him. He took it indeed upon Himself, He was made sin for us, but sin was never His own as it was ours. If it could so disfigure and degrade the sinless Lamb of God when laid upon Him from without, what must be the disfigurement and degradation sin works in us, springing up as it does out of ourselves, being a part of our sinful nature producing its natural fruits?

3. But was the Son of God really degraded by all these consequences of sin? On the contrary, His Sacred Humanity had never been so glorious or so worthy of honour as it was then. If He was unsightly before men, in the eyes of His Eternal Father He was crowned with honour and glory. There is nothing so pleasing to God as voluntary self-abasement and humiliation, nothing that brings so rich a recompense. How foolish then am I when I seek to avoid humiliation, and hate to be made like to the Son of God by suffering contempt and reproach from others!

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent.

The Condemnation to Death.

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 24—26.

1. Pilate tries first one plan, then another, to avoid passing a sentence which he knew to be unjust. One plan after another fails, and now he is brought face to face with a choice on which the salvation of his soul may well depend. It was the turning-point in his life: the grace of God urging him on one side, and on the other the fear of man. So in the life of each there is some turning-point, some occasion when the choice made will decide his future both in life and eternity. Unhappy those who in such a moment choose as Pilate chose!

2. The motive that led Pilate to condemn Jesus was the fear of man. He did not dare to face the consequences of doing his duty. He trembled before the opinion of others and the dread of losing his worldly position and honour. To how many has the same motive been a cause of eternal loss? Is it not one before which I have sometimes quailed, loving honour from men, and failing in what I knew was the will of God from a desire to please others?

3. Pilate ordered the sentence to be written out condemning Jesus to death, and then deliberately signed it. But first he washed his hands before the people, declaring himself guiltless of the blood of the Just Man that he condemned. O fruitless ceremony! He could not wash from his soul the black stain of cowardice and of treachery to his conscience. It is no use doing ill and saying we did not mean it. Such an evasion, like Pilate's protest, rather adds to than diminishes the sin.

The Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus sets out on the Way to Calvary.

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 32.

1. It was not really Pilate who condemned Jesus to death, says St. Bernard, it was His love for us. He had been longing all His life through for that moment when He was to carry out His Father's will and redeem the world by dying for us. He knew that the Divine mandate had gone forth that without shedding of blood there would be no remission. The voice of Pilate, sentencing Him to death, was but the expression of His own love for sinners, and of His joyful acceptance of the Cross for their sake. O Jesus, may I love Thee in return for such love for me!

2. The Cross has been prepared beforehand, and as soon as the sentence has been passed they bring it forward to be laid upon the shoulders of their Victim. Jesus takes the Cross, and kisses the instrument of His agony as a welcome friend. He did this, not merely because He loved us and therefore loved the Cross, but to teach us to love our crosses, to accept them as gifts from God. How can we dislike them when they make us like to Jesus, and must be borne after Him if we are ever to share His joy in Heaven?

3. On the shoulder of Jesus was a large, open wound, scarcely covered by the garments thrown upon Him. The weight of the Cross rested on this wound, causing Him the most exquisite agony. It was by this that He was earning for us patience under our bodily sufferings. However keen, they are nothing to what the Son of God endured on His road to Calvary. Jesus, grant me patience under my sufferings!

Monday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Via Dolorosa.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 27—31.

1. Torn and bleeding, scarcely able to sustain the heavy burden of the Cross, with His long garment entangling His feet, dragged on by the brutal soldiery, Jesus treads the sacred Way of the Cross. After going a few steps He stumbles and falls; rising with difficulty, He totters on a short distance farther and falls again. O my Lord and my God, I beseech Thee by these Thy most painful falls, grant that I may never again fall into deliberate sin.

2. On the way some women express their grief and compassion with Jesus. His appearance is so pitiable that they cannot restrain their tears. Jesus turns to them, tells them to weep not for Him, but for themselves and for their children. If sin has wrought such a work of destruction in the Son of God, in whom evil had nothing to lay hold of, in whom the green wood could be blackened externally but not consumed by the flame, what would be its effects on sinners in whom the fire of sin rages as in the dry tinder? How ought I to fear the least spark of sin which may kindle in me the fire of passion and destroy me utterly!

3. One of those holy women, named Veronica, with a handkerchief wipes from His Face the blood and sweat. On looking at the handkerchief she sees the impression of His Sacred Countenance stamped upon it. So upon the hearts of all who do acts of kindness for Christ's sake there is imprinted His likeness. Each deed of charity tends to produce in our soul that likeness to Him in which all holiness consists.

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus Meets His Holy Mother.

Read St. Matt. xvi. 24—28.

1. Our Blessed Lady, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, goes forth to meet her Son as He drags Himself up the hill of Calvary. With what horror and dismay must she have been stricken through at the sight of her darling Son and her God, His divine beauty obliterated, mangled and torn, covered with blood and filth, unsightly and terrible to behold! Heart-broken anguish fills her soul, and we may well believe that she would have died of sorrow had she not been miraculously supported by the power of God. O Mother of God! obtain for me a share in thy grief and thy intercession!

2. What a fresh pang of sorrow to the gentle Heart of Jesus to see His holy Mother, pale and haggard, come to share in His Sacred Passion by her compassion! None so full of sympathy as He, none so full of acute feeling for the woes of others. If He compassionated the women on the way, how much more His own Mother, whom He loved far better than all the world beside! O Mary, obtain for me, a sinner, the sacred compassion of Jesus!

3. Our Lady shared in the Passion of Christ in a way in which none else could—none even of the saints—simply because she was sinless. She had not to suffer for herself. She had no sin to expiate. This it is which justifies us in giving her the title of co-Redemptrix. She too, who knew no sin, was made sin for us. This earned for her the privilege of sharing in all the agony of the sinless Lamb of God.

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.
Simon of Cyrene.

Read St. Mark xv. 21.

1. Our Blessed Lord falls again and again beneath the weight of the Cross, until it becomes evident to the soldiers that He will never be able to drag it to the place of execution. They accordingly lay hold of a heathen passing by, Simon the Cyrenian, and him they compel to carry the Cross. How little Simon knew the happiness in store for him when those rough soldiers seize him and force him to the ignominious task. How often we too fail to recognize in the sudden disagreeables and contradictions we encounter God's wonderful designs of mercy to us!

2. Simon at first bore the Cross surlily and reluctantly, chafing under the hardship inflicted on him. But as he carries it, an unaccountable change comes over him. It has the virtue to change his heart, and to make of him a devoted follower of the Crucified, one of the pillars of the Apostolic Church. Thus many a cross that we carry reluctantly turns out to be really the means of our sanctification and salvation.

3. Before Simon arrives at the summit of Calvary the Cross has endeared itself to him. He has recognized that to carry it for Jesus was no hardship, but a privilege and a happiness. So too the saints learn to love the Cross, to embrace it, to seek it, to carry it with all joy, to be almost discontented if they are without it. This is the very height of peace and felicity; for those who find their joy in the Cross find everywhere around them cause for rejoicing.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus is Nailed to the Cross.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 32—34.

1. Arrived at the summit of Calvary our Divine Saviour is roughly stripped of His garments and exposed to the rude gaze of the scoffing multitude. This shame He endured to atone for our most shameful deeds, for our human respect, for our glorying in our shame, for our boasting and love of display before the eyes of men. Yet when we see the King of Glory thus exposed to shame, will not shame be far dearer to us than the empty honours that men bestow?

2. The executioners then seize Jesus and lay Him down upon the Cross. Holes have been bored in the wood at the extremities of the cross-piece and in the lower part of the stem, and our Lord's Sacred Limbs are almost dislocated by being dragged until the Hands and Feet reach the parts that have been pierced. Then long, sharp nails are held by one of the soldiers, while another with a hammer drives them in through the hands and feet of Jesus. The blows are struck; the Blood gushes forth; while the Divine Victim moans piteously under the exquisite pain. O Jesus, grant me a heart-felt compassion with Thee in Thy sufferings!

3. When our Lord is nailed to the Cross, the soldiers raise it on high, and let the base of it fall into a hole dug in the ground. The shock renews afresh the agony of Jesus. No word is heard from His Mouth, save one which He repeats again and again: "Father, forgive them!" Even then He was thinking of others, not of Himself. Was ever love like His? Why do I not love Him more in return?

Friday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.

The Deriding of Jesus.

Read St. Matt. xxvii. 39—44.

1. The sight of Jesus hanging on the Cross, so far from melting the hearts of the Jews, only hardened them the more against Him. Instead of feeling pity they rejoiced over their victim and insulted Him in His misery. When men deliberately refuse to listen to the voice of Jesus, they become quite insensible after a time to His claim on them. They think evil good, and good evil; they are given over to a reprobate mind. Even in little things, those who do not obey the impulses of grace become deaf to its calls, or even feel a positive aversion for that which they once loved but have now rejected.

2. How apparently impotent to save Himself the King of Glory seems to be! But that weakness is true strength. It is by these outrages and insults, by this passive endurance of their jeers and gibes, that Christ our Lord is doing the wondrous work of our redemption, and earning graces for all those who suffer insult for Him, to rejoice in being counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake.

3. But He is doing more than this. He is also preparing for His Sacred Humanity a glory corresponding to all this ignominy. Of Him it is true beyond all others that he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Each taunt, each mocking word, was to earn the praise of the angels and saints to all eternity. Here is an encouragement for us! What matters it if men despise and insult us, if God approves! The just Judge will not forget in the day of account what we have suffered for Him.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday in Lent.
The Good Thief.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 39—43.

1. Among those who mocked and derided Jesus were the two thieves crucified with Him. But very soon His unspeakable gentleness and meekness touched the heart of one of the two. First he ceased his words of insult, then he boldly reproved his companion, and bore testimony to the innocence of Jesus and to His authority as King and Lord. What a divine power there is in weakness! The sight of the uncomplaining patience of Christ convinced this robber that He was King of all the earth, and that He who was now dying on the Cross would soon reign for ever and ever. "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom!"

2. Remember me! This was his simple prayer. But we know that it was enough. If Christ remembers us, all will be well. What we have to dread is lest He forget us by reason of our having forgotten Him. This prayer should often be on our lips: "O Lord, remember me! In the hour of temptation, remember me! When sorrow bears hard on me, remember me! In sickness and in my last agony, O Lord, remember me!"

3. Our Lord answers this prayer of the good thief with divine generosity. All his sins are forgiven him; and as soon as his agony is over he is to be received into the company of the blest and to be with Christ in Paradise. What a rich reward for his confession of Christ! What a glorious answer to his prayer that Christ will remember him!

The Sixth Sunday in Lent.

Jesus Commends His Disciples to His Holy Mother's Care.

Read St. John xix. 25—27.

1. Our Divine Saviour did not depart from those He loved without providing them with a Mother who should be their consoler, their protector, their advocate with God. In the person of St. John, He intrusted them all to Mary's care. If He had simply been providing Mary with a home, He would first have addressed St. John and commended to him the pious task of sheltering the Mother of God. By speaking first to Mary, He showed that it was she who was to shelter all those who were desolate and in sorrow. St. John was the representative of all who love Jesus, when Jesus said to Mary respecting him, "Woman, behold thy son."

2. This was the occasion when our Lady for a second time became a Mother. The birth of her first-begotten Jesus cost her no pang of travail; the birth of her spiritual children, the sinful sons of men, brought to her unspeakable anguish. The Queen of Heaven became the Queen of Dolours before she could earn the right to exercise over each of us a mother's fostering care. How we ought to value the privilege of being her children, when it cost Mary such unspeakable suffering!

3. When Jesus said to Mary, "Woman, behold thy son," He asked our Lady to regard us with a mother's love for His sake. Her love for Him was to be transferred to us, without, however, becoming one whit the less. She was to love us for Jesus' sake; to show her love for Him by loving us. With what perfect confidence can we go to Mary, who sees in each of us, in spite of our sins, the image of her Divine Son!

Monday in Holy Week.

The Dereliction of Jesus on the Cross.

Read St. Mark xv. 33—36.

1. Our Lord had for a long time been silent. A thick darkness had gathered ; most of the spectators had departed in fear. The mocking Pharisees had been awed to silence. Few were left save the soldiers, St. John, and a faithful group of holy women. All at once a piercing cry from the Divine Sufferer breaks the silence, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" These words were an expression of the thick darkness which our Lord had permitted to gather round His human Soul, and to hide from Him as it were the face of His Eternal Father. This desolation was by far the greatest of all the unspeakable sufferings of the Son of God.

2. What was its cause? Nothing else but sin. He was made sin for us, and having thus identified Himself with the sins of men so far as was possible for the sinless Lamb of God, He allowed Himself to experience to the utmost degree that He could the awful misery which is the consequence of sin—the black, dark hopelessness (if the word is a lawful one) which results to the sinner whom God forsakes. This consequence of sin Jesus took upon Himself to save men from the eternal remorse and despair which otherwise would have been their lot.

3. This cry of Jesus is a model prayer for us in times of darkness and desolation. We sometimes feel as if God had forsaken us, and cry out in our misery and sore distress. We are always safe in echoing Jesus' words, and He who hears us use them will remember His own dereliction and help us in ours.

Tuesday in Holy Week.

The Thirst upon the Cross.

Read St. John xix. 28, 29.

1. There is nothing that causes such agonizing thirst as loss of blood. The prayer of the wounded soldier upon the battlefield is always for a drink of water; he forgets all other pains in his burning thirst. What must have been the intolerable suffering of our Lord, whose sacred Body had been gradually drained of every drop of blood? All day long the Blood had been flowing—at the scourging, on the way to Calvary, as He was dragged hither and thither, with the sharp cords cutting His wrists. And now upon the Cross, as from hands and feet a stream bedewed the ground, fiercer and fiercer grew the burning parching thirst which consumed Him. O my Jesus, was there none to quench that thirst endured for us?

2. Our Lord's thirst was to atone especially for the sins of intemperance and self-indulgence in drink. Every sin of drunkenness and excess or self-indulgence in our food and drink added to that thirst and made it still more intolerable. My God, forgive me any such offences, and help me to deny myself some lawful indulgence, that so I may atone for my sins and assuage in some degree that sacred thirst Thou didst endure for me.

3. There was, however, a deeper meaning in Our Lord's cry: "I thirst!" He was thirsting for the souls of sinners, thirsting for the love of ungrateful men, thirsting for *my* love. He thirsts for it still, that I may be more faithful to His grace. O my Jesus, help me to love Thee more!

Wednesday in Holy Week.
The Death of Jesus.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 45—48.

1. After Our Lord has hung in agony for three hours upon the Cross, at last the time approaches when His deliverance is at hand. He has endured every possible form of suffering, bodily and mental. His body has been subjected to a physical torture far worse than the accumulated sufferings of the martyrs; His Sacred Soul has been rent asunder with an anguish and desolation more awful than any save the eternal anguish of Hell. He has sacrificed His honour, His reputation; He has been esteemed a fool and a madman. Now there is only one sacrifice more that He can make to His Eternal Father for man—the sacrifice of His life. He is determined to give up all for us, to be obedient even to death.

2. What was it that caused the death of our Lord? Not the executioners, not the Jews, not the agony on the Cross; they were but instruments. It was sin. Sin had in it a malice sufficient even to rob of life God, our Lord and King. What a strange mystery sin is! And how strange that we do not hate it more when we see its power to destroy!

3. The death of Jesus is for each one of us the most important fact in human history, or even in the order of the Providence of God. Hence the Sacrament of Sacraments is primarily a commemoration of it. When we receive Holy Communion, we "show the death of the Lord till He come," and, therefore, His Sacred Passion and Death should be the chief subject of our thoughts whenever we approach the Holy Table, and especially on the eve of the solemn day when He instituted the Sacrament of His love.

Maundy Thursday.

Jesus' mystical Death in the Blessed Eucharist.

Read St. John xiv. 34—37.

1. Each time that Holy Mass is said, the Sacrifice of our Blessed Lord upon the Cross is represented in the Sacrifice that takes place upon the altar. Thus, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the Divine decree, continues to be slain mystically, and will continue as long as the world shall last. With such a sight before our eyes, how can we ever forget Him? how can we ever lose heart or despond with this abiding proof of His tender love before our eyes?

2. In the Blood and Water that flowed from our Lord's side when pierced by the centurion's spear, were represented the Sacraments of the Church, the Blood of Christ that inebriates us in Holy Communion, the water that cleanses our souls in Baptism and Penance. His Sacred Heart that was open then is open still; the rich stream of graces still continues; it has flowed even unto me. What countless graces I have received from the love that has been poured upon me from the Sacred Heart of Jesus!

3. The Sacred Host that we receive in Holy Communion reminds us in many things of the dead Body of Jesus as it hung upon the Cross, all the glory hidden—no life to all appearance there; in the power of all to treat it as they choose; reduced to the lowest humiliation. Yet it is our God and our Lord, the object of the adoring love of angels and of men, He whom the Heaven of heavens cannot contain, who condescends to be our Guest and the food of our souls. Meditate on the unspeakable love of Jesus sacrificed for us!

Good Friday.

The Descent from the Cross.

Read St. Mark xv. 38—46.

1. No sooner is the Sacrifice consummated and the last drop of the precious Blood shed from our Lord's Sacred Heart, than all is changed. That lifeless Body is now treated with the utmost respect and veneration. See how gently and carefully Joseph and Nicodemus wind linen bands around the limbs and lower it to the ground, reverently adoring that Body which had only a few hours before been a laughing-stock and object of contempt. Henceforth no more ignominy, no more contempt, no more ill-usage, but the love and adoration of saints and angels to all eternity.

2. Our Lady receives the body of her Son. What were her thoughts as she gazes into the five Wounds, and sees how from head to foot it is covered with gaping wounds and bruises, battered out of all shape by the cruelty of man? O Mother of Sorrows, great as an ocean is thy sorrow! What must be thy hatred of sin when thou seest what it has wrought in the divine beauty of thy spotless Son! What a mixture of agonized compassion and mournful sorrow, and hope and consolation and gratitude and triumphant joy, fills thy sacred soul while thou lookest on the dead Body of thy Son.

3. The day on which Jesus died is indeed well called Good Friday. It is the day when Jesus consummated His victory over death. While we mourn over His sufferings and our sins which caused them, we must also rejoice exceedingly at the thought of Satan conquered and Heaven opened, and millions of sinners cleansed from sin in His most precious Blood.

Easter Eve.

The Entombment.

Read St. Luke xxiii. 50—56.

1. When our Lady's mournful task was finished, the Body of Jesus was laid in the new tomb of St. Joseph of Arimathea, there to remain until the hour of its joyful Resurrection. Let us contemplate it as it lies there: disfigured by countless wounds and scars, so apparently helpless, yet none the less the joy of God and worthy of our highest adoration. Passive and cold and motionless, but soon to be radiant with the most dazzling beauty; dead, but living with a divine life. Learn from this (1) the glory of suffering; (2) the power of apparent helplessness when God is with us; (3) the beauty of passive obedience; (4) the true life of those who are dead to the world.

2. What was Our Lord doing while thus apparently inactive in the silent tomb? He was beginning His work of triumph, delivering countless souls from Purgatory and from Limbo, consoling the patriarchs and prophets, fulfilling His promise of Paradise to the good thief, trampling on Satan, and changing the kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of God and of His Christ. So it is with us. When we seem useless and doing nothing, we are often really doing the greatest things for God.

3. The tomb where Christ is laid is to be the model of my soul when I receive Holy Communion; silent from all din of earthly things, cleansed from all stain of sin by a good confession and firm resolution to amend, dedicated to Him alone, His sacred Body embalmed by my love, and wrapped in the clean winding-sheet of purity of intention. Thus will His presence there be the pledge of my resurrection with Him.

RESURREXIT.

MEDITATIONS FROM EASTER TO THE ASCENSION.

Easter Sunday.

1.—The Resurrection.

Read 1 Cor. xv. 20—25.

1. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the sacred Soul of Jesus returned to quicken once more the Body that lay lifeless in the tomb, and He rose again from the dead. It was but the commencement of the third day since His Crucifixion; but His love for His sorrowing friends made Him abridge the time, that He might hasten to console them in their sorrow. He still has the same loving thoughtfulness for His friends. It is still His chief desire to make those happy who love Him.

2. His Sacred Body passed through the tomb noiselessly, and without stirring the huge stone that had been placed there to make His Resurrection impossible. O foolish devices of men! how utterly futile against the will of God! In one moment He can burst every bond that human malice or human ingenuity can contrive! He that dwells in the Heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them.

3. See Him glorious in His Divine Beauty, rising from the Tomb! What unspeakable joy and happiness in that Face, so lately marred by our sins, so lately pale, and sad, and sorrowful! Never was there joy on earth like that of Jesus when He rose again. I will rejoice with Him to-day: I will forget my own troubles and sorrows, and give myself to an unselfish joy in the Resurrection of my King and my God.

Easter Monday.

2.—The Appearance of Jesus to His Holy Mother.

Read 1 St. John iv. 15—19.

1. Our Lord's first visit was to His Holy Mother. It is not mentioned in Holy Scripture, but it stands to reason that He should first minister comfort to her who had before all else shared His sufferings. It would have been something quite unnatural if He had passed her over and given joy to some other heart before hers. Was He not united to her by a closer tie than that which exists between any two other beings in the whole world? and had not her heart always beat in unison with His? The instinct of every Catholic echoes the saying of St. Ignatius, that those indeed must be without understanding who suppose that on Easter morn any creature could be preferred to her.

2. How shall we paint the happiness of that meeting? For Mary, it was Paradise begun. That one moment was more than enough to make her forget all her sorrows. As each pang of His sacred suffering had echoed in her heart, so much more each pulsation of joy, each note of triumph. From that day forth, the remembrance of that meeting was ever present to her, lighting up all the rest of her life with a boundless joy.

3. What earned that happiness for Mary? Her perfect obedience. There was none who imitated the obedience of Jesus as Mary did; and therefore the joy of Jesus, in His triumph, flowed unchecked into her Immaculate Heart. It is my disobedience to grace which makes me gloomy and downcast. If I am obedient, I too shall be full of peace and joy.

Easter Tuesday.

3.—The Holy Women on their way to the Sepulchre.

Read St. Mark xvi. 1—4.

1. All through the Sabbath day the holy women had been anxiously looking forward to the mournful pleasure of carrying to the sepulchre sweet spices and perfumes that they had prepared to embalm the Body of Jesus; and very early in the morning of the first day of the week they started on their pious errand. But, strange to say, it had never occurred to them that a huge stone closed the door of the tomb, sealed with an official seal and guarded by a picket of soldiers. This is one of the truest marks of love, it seems to forget all difficulties, to overleap all obstacles; it has a wonderful confidence that it will attain its object. Is this the character of my love to Christ?

2. On the road to the sepulchre, as the difficulty became close at hand, they were stricken with fear—"Who shall roll us back the stone?" Yet on they went, nothing daunted, trusting God with implicit confidence, relying on His power to take away what seemed to be an insuperable obstacle. So when dangers and difficulties threaten me, do I go straight on, trusting in the goodness of my God?

3. Their holy confidence was not disappointed; holy confidence never is disappointed. The more we trust God, the more marvels He will work for us. An angel had been sent to reward them for their persevering devotion, by doing, with angelic hands, what was altogether beyond their power to perform. So now, God will send an angel, if needful, to fulfil the desires of those who trust in Him.

Wednesday in Easter Week.

4.—The Holy Women at the Sepulchre.

Read St. Mark xvi. 4—7.

1. What must have been the joy of the holy women, when they found that God had granted the desires of their heart, and rolled the huge stone away! It was one of those joyful surprises by which God delights to encourage faithful hearts! Just when all seems hopeless, He steps in, and every difficulty vanishes. If this is not my experience, it ought to be; and the only reason why it is not, is because I have been distrustful and despondent. Courage, faint heart! He is waiting to help thee.

2. But when they entered the tomb, what a surprise! Instead of the dead Body of Jesus, they found an angel, clothed in white, sitting at the right side of the tomb. They were utterly astonished. They had never understood the meaning of our Lord's promise that He would rise again. What could have happened? Had His Body been carried away? Had God taken it up to Heaven? If He had been restored to life, He was lost to them. Their hearts were filled with mingled hope and fear, joy and sorrow, astonishment and a bewildered sense of happiness.

3. The angel's words soon reassure them. "He is not here, for He is risen as He said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen." (St. Matt. xxviii. 6, 7.) Trembling with joy, they obey the command. No need of spices and ointment now. It seems too good to be true.—He is risen! My Jesus delights to turn sorrow into joy.

Thursday in Easter Week.

5.—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Mary Magdalen.

Read St. Mark xvi. 9—12.

1. Of all the sinful children of men, our Lord chose out St. Mary Magdalen for the special privilege of being the first to whom he should appear after His Resurrection. What earned for her this privilege? It was one thing, and one only: it was her single-minded fidelity to Jesus Christ. In joy and sorrow, in prosperity and adversity, in consolation and desolation, she had always fixed her heart on Him. This it is that He values; this it is that draws Him near to the faithful soul.

2. Had she always been faithful? No; in the past she had been a great sinner, given up to pride, luxury, impurity, so that it was literally true that seven devils had dwelt within her. But Jesus had called her, and she had listened to His Voice; and speedily the seven devils were cast out, never more to return; and the place where they had dwelt was now occupied by the love of Jesus. O happy change! For me, too, sinner as I am, Jesus is ready to do the like.

3. But did He not shrink from such a sinner? O no! He is the friend of sinners; their very sins draw Him to them; and the memory of all that He has done to save them from their misery is a link that binds Him to them in the bonds of close affection. He came to seek and to save them, and in Heaven He loves them still with tender, unceasing affection. What wonderful, what astonishing mercy is this that Jesus shows to us poor sinners!

Friday in Easter Week.

6.—Why Jesus appeared first to St. Mary Magdalen

Read St. John xx. 11—19.

1. Had not many been faithful to Jesus besides St. Mary Magdalen? Why did He choose her before them all?—before St. John, before Mary of Salome, and the rest of the holy women? It was because of the persistency of her love. When St. John had looked into the empty sepulchre and returned, and when the other holy women had gone their way, Mary still stood at the sepulchre without, weeping for love of Him, and sorrow at having lost Him. God loves this persistency. If we went on praying and weeping, we should obtain all we ask.

2. Jesus also appeared first to Mary Magdalen because she loved Him with an affection that absorbed all the powers of her soul. When she saw the two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had been laid, she took no notice of them; and when they asked her why she wept, her only answer was: "Because they have taken away my Lord." This is the sort of love that Jesus values; this is the love He will recompense by His most liberal graces.

3. None of all those who loved our Lord had shed so many tears as St. Mary Magdalen. She had wept often at the thought of her sins and her ingratitude; she had wept of pure love at the feet of Jesus; she had wept tears of bitter, heart-broken sorrow, as she knelt beneath the Cross; and now she wept still. Our Lord loves such tears—tears of penance, tears of compassion, and tears of love. I will then pray for this gift of holy tears.

Saturday in Easter Week.

7.—How Jesus appeared to St. Mary Magdalen.

Read St. John xx. 11—17.

1. While Mary knelt and wept she suddenly heard a sound behind her, and turning round she saw One standing there, Whom in her grief and amid her blinding tears she did not recognize. She thought Him to be the gardener of St. Joseph of Arimathea. So to all His servants Christ sometimes appears under strange forms. The poor old man who asks an alms, the orphan in distress, perhaps the churlish neighbour or trying companion who taxes our patience, are really representatives of Christ, though under strange forms.

2. But when Jesus speaks, when He calls her by her name, then at once she recognizes Him. It is the instinct of love recognizing the Voice of the Beloved. One of the tests of love to Jesus is that we at once perceive when it is He that speaks. The ears of those who love Him not can scarcely discern between His Voice and the sound of their own natural affections and desires; they have so often refused to listen, that they cease to hear. But His sheep know His Voice, and those who love Him best are the quickest to catch every whisper of His grace.

3. Jesus calls her by her name—Mary. In Holy Scripture when God calls any by their name it means that they are to become what the name implies, and that God will give them the grace to do so. Abraham, Israel, Peter, the Holy Name itself, were such names. So Mary means that she who bears the name shares in the grace of her who was full of grace.

Low Sunday.

8.—The Appearance of Jesus to St. Peter.

Read St. John xx. 3—10; St. Luke xxiv. 34.

1. The return of the holy women after their first journey to the Tomb produced in the disciples of our Lord, who were gathered in sorrow and fear in the guest-chamber, the greatest astonishment and dismay. When they told their story, most laughed at it as the offspring of women's imagination. It seemed to be an idle tale, and was not believed. Yet they had heard our Lord announce in the plainest terms His Resurrection. How slow men are to believe! how unreasonably incredulous and reluctant to accept the Divine promises!

2. But two of those present did not share this kind of blind unbelief. St. Peter and St. John at once hasten to the sepulchre to see for themselves whether the women's words were true. First St. Peter and then St. John enter the sepulchre, see, and believe. On their return our Lord appears to St. Peter. The chief of the Apostles, the future Vicar of Christ, must needs receive the first honour from His Master. Our Lord bestows a special dignity and special privileges on those whom He invests with His own authority. How much, then, we ought to respect them!

3. But our Lord also chose St. Peter for this honour first of the Apostles, to reassure him, to let him know that all was forgiven, that He loved him, in spite of his denial, as dearly as ever. So we need not fear lest our past sins be remembered, if now our hearts are full of love to Jesus. He thinks not of what we have been in the past, but of what we now are in the present.

Monday in Second Week after Easter.

9.—The Appearance of Jesus to the Holy Women.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 8—10.

1. After the holy women had delivered their message at the guest-chamber, they returned once more to the tomb, and saw once more the vision of angels. As they returned they saw another sight, which made them forget the angels and the splendour that had filled the empty tomb. Jesus Himself stood before them in His Divine beauty, with words of welcome. What unspeakable joy must have filled their souls—a joy which was an anticipation of the joy which will fill each faithful soul at the Judgment, when Jesus welcomes it with the words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

2. With a simultaneous instinct they fell upon the ground and adored with supreme adoration His glorified Humanity. They took hold of His Sacred Feet lest He should depart from them. He was to them no longer the prophet sent from God to ransom man. Now He was God Himself —God made Man, and they feared lest He should return to Heaven, and they should see Him no more. So we should learn to value the Presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and after Holy Communion. He is closer to us than He was to these holy women. Why do we not cling more to Him lest He leave us?

3. Jesus consoles their fears. "Fear not: I am not going to depart. You shall meet Me again in Galilee with the assembled disciples. Go tell them to go thither; there they shall see Me." What a privilege thus to be the messengers of Jesus! We, too, can be His messengers, His apostles to others, by carrying His messages of love and consolation to those in distress and misery.

Tuesday in Second Week after Easter.

10.—The Two Disciples on the Road to Emmaus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 13—16.

1. On the same day two of the disciples, in their sorrow and disappointment, set off together to Emmaus, a little village some eight miles distant from Jerusalem. They did not act wisely in departing from the little community, and seeking thus to divert themselves from their sorrow. If they had remained at home, they would soon have heard the confirmation, first by one and then by another, of the women's joyful tidings. It is never well for one who is a member of any society, bound by religious ties, to act apart from the rest. Common action and common life carries its own blessing with it.

2. Yet their journey did not divert them from their sadness. One thought, and one only, occupied their minds—they could not shake off the remembrance of the crushing disappointment they had suffered in the death and burial out of sight of Him whom they had hoped was to be the Redeemer of His people. They could not think and talk of any subject but this as they mournfully walked along, side by side, to Emmaus.

3. This sorrow of theirs, this longing regret, was so pleasing to our Lord, that He was drawn by it to come and walk with them and console them on the very morning of the Resurrection. He sought the society of two ordinary disciples, and could not keep away from them, because they were thinking of Him. He is so grateful to those who remember Him! If we remember Him and love Him, He will be at our side though we know it not, ever ready to help and comfort us.

Wednesday in Second Week after Easter.

11.—Jesus appears to the Two Disciples.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 16—19.

1. At the very time that these disciples were giving up all for lost and lamenting that their hopes were dashed to the ground for ever, Jesus was close by them, drawing nearer to them at every step. So it is with us. Just when we are most down-hearted, and all seems black, and dark, and hopeless, He is close at hand, waiting to manifest Himself, with a long series of blessings to bestow upon us, and consolations to cheer our hearts. A time of darkness is almost always a sign of light and joy hard by.

2. Jesus did not at once reveal Himself to the two disciples going to Emmaus, but joined Himself to them under the guise of a stranger. Their eyes were held, that they should not know Him. Though they loved Him dearly, and sorrowed bitterly for His sufferings and death, yet their slowness to believe all that Christ had told them, and all that the prophets had foretold, threw a veil over their eyes. How many now, faithful servants of God, fail to realize the love of God and His presence with them, because they are stubborn and slow to believe!

3. Our Lord begins with asking them why they were sad. Did He not know? Yes, He knew well enough; but He likes us to tell Him our troubles. We do not do this half enough. He never tires of hearing of our sorrows, trials, difficulties, temptations. No detail is beneath His notice. He is always ready to listen, and He never listens without sending help.

Thursday in Second Week after Easter.

12.—The Disciples tell Jesus their Troubles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 19—24.

1. The disciples, moved by the kindly sympathy of the stranger who has joined Himself to them, tell Him what it is that makes them sad. It is all that they have seen done to Jesus—His condemnation to death and His Crucifixion. If these disciples were but imperfect Christians, they had at least that devotion to Him which is the mark of men of goodwill. They had rejoiced in His glorious deeds, and they had sorrowed bitterly in His sufferings and death, and now they are quite overwhelmed with grief at the thought that all His life and mission had ended in a miserable failure. All this was pleasing to Jesus, in spite of the weak faith it implied. It showed a genuine willingness and zeal in the good cause.

2. Notice how prudent these disciples are in what they say to the stranger: they do not call Him the Son of God, or the Messias, or the King of Israel; they simply describe Him as "a prophet mighty in work and word." Here we learn great caution in speaking. We must not say that which is likely to be scoffed at; while we confess our faith, we must not expose it to the ridicule of unbelievers.

3. Yet they cannot conceal their disappointment from the stranger. *Sperabamus!* we had hoped for so much. We had such lofty expectations. We thought a new day was to dawn upon us; and now—! How often this is our experience! We, too, hoped for great things, and have been disappointed. But we must not despond. After all, these fears are vain—all is not lost.

Friday in Second Week after Easter.

13.—The Discourse of Jesus to the Disciples.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 22—27.

1. These disciples had so completely lost all hope that, instead of taking courage when the holy women had announced the vision of angels and the news of the Resurrection, they were only frightened by it. They took a gloomy view of what ought to have cheered and encouraged them; they were obstinate in their grief and disappointment. This it was that made them so hopeless: they refused to look at the bright side of things. This is generally the secret of utter hopelessness; there is something wilful in it. We should have more hope if we had more submission to the holy will of God.

2. When the disciples had finished the story, Jesus takes up the tale. He at once tells them the plain truth—that they are fools not to accept the women's story, not to believe all that was written respecting Christ in the prophets of old. There is no folly like incredulity. We have Christ's own word for it. Would that sceptics would take this to heart, instead of priding themselves on their fancied discernment.

3. Then He shows them that all these sufferings were the very proof that Jesus was the Messias that the prophets one and all bear testimony to, the necessity of His first suffering, and then entering into His glory. This is the Divine law for all the followers of Jesus—first suffering, and then glory. If I desire glory in Heaven, I must not shrink from suffering now.

Saturday in Second Week after Easter.

14.—The Effects of the Discourse of Jesus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 27—33.

1. As Jesus speaks, the hearts of the two disciples burn within them. Never had they heard such a discourse as this; never had they understood the meaning of the Scriptures, till they listened to the inspired words of this Divine expositor. How could they have been so blind before as not to have recognized, in the sufferings and death of Jesus of Nazareth, the fulfilment of the prophecies? We too cannot understand Holy Scripture if we are left to ourselves; outside the Church, men read it, and find in it their follies and fancies. It is only those who are taught of God who can ever read God's Word aright.

2. Why did the words of Jesus thus carry them out of themselves, so that the walk to Emmaus seemed all too short? It was because He who spoke was the Son of God; and there flowed into His words the grace of which His Sacred Heart was full. It is just the same with the servants of Christ, whether priests or ordinary Christians—their words move the hearts of others in proportion to their own holiness. How much more influence for good I should have if I were more holy!

3. There was another reason why our Lord's words thus stirred the hearts of these two disciples. It was because they were men of goodwill. To such, the Voice of God is sweet and attractive. "My sheep hear My voice," says our Lord; "I know Mine, and Mine know Me." The enemies of God are repelled by His Voice and the voice of His ministers and of His Church; they criticize, instead of listening in humility. What am I—a critic or a disciple?

Second Sunday after Easter.

15.—The Arrival at Emmaus.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 28, 29.

1. In the midst of the discourse, which had made them forget all else, they found themselves at their destination; and their Divine Companion made as though He would go farther. He let them think He was intending to leave them, in order to teach them, and through them to teach us, the necessity of persisting in prayer. Our Lord often lets us think that He is going to forsake us, or that He is unkind to us, or that He is not ready with help in time of need, in order to see whether we are in earnest in our desire to have Him for our companion and our friend, or whether we are ready to give Him up in the face of difficulties.

2. These two disciples will not hear of Jesus going farther. What do they not owe Him for that heavenly discourse that has turned their sorrow into joy! What would they not give to keep Him with them, and to listen to more of such words as His! They simply compel Him to remain with them, urging the motives that they regard as most likely to be effectual. This is what Jesus loves—that we should urge Him with constant importunity until we constrain Him to listen to our petitions.

3. We should each day invoke our Lord with these words: "Stay with us." Each morning when we wake, "Stay with us through the day;" in time of temptation or danger, "Stay with us;" in Holy Communion, "Stay with us with Thy Divine power;" in the time of sickness and in the hour of death, "Stay with us, O Lord Jesus!"

Monday in Third Week after Easter.

16.—The Divine Guest.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 30—35.

1. Jesus, unable to resist the importunity of these two faithful hearts, deigns to be their guest; after He has shared their meal He provides for them a heavenly banquet. For the second time He consecrates the Eucharistic Bread, and feeds His entertainers with the sacred food of His own Body and Blood. Then at length their eyes are opened, and in the reception of the Divine Mysteries they recognize that He who worked the marvel is none else than the Lamb that had been slain; the Great Prophet whom they had loved, but had not known; Christ, their Lord, their Creator, and their King.

2. To open the eyes is one of the effects of a good Communion. When I receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ I should make use of the happy moment to ask His advice, to consult Him on my difficulties, to pray for more light, to beg that self-love and obstinacy of will and pertinacity of judgment may not blind my eyes. Why do I not make more of the brief time during which He is my guest, and is therefore bound to listen to me?

3. No sooner had the two disciples received Holy Communion and made an act of faith in the Divinity of Jesus than He vanishes from their sight. How their hearts burn with joy and peace and gratitude and love and devotion! How could they have ever doubted! O what happiness is theirs, as they hasten back to Jerusalem to communicate the joyful news to those whom they had left in sorrow and distress!

Tuesday in Third Week after Easter.

17.—The Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 33—36.

1. When the two disciples arrived at Jerusalem, they found the doors of the house where the Apostles were, barred and bolted for fear of the Jews. When they have gained admission they see a very different state of things from the sorrow and despondency of the morning. All are full of a trembling excitement: Christ has appeared, not merely to the women, but to Peter himself. Yet most of them scarcely dare to hope for such joy; and in spite of this confirmation by the new-comers, some are still incredulous. So men are naturally incredulous of some great happiness; and for this reason men of goodwill are naturally the slowest to believe until some light from Heaven enlightens them or facts afford evidence that cannot be disputed.

2. While the assembled Apostles are discussing the news, suddenly Jesus Himself appears in their midst. The doors are still fastened; but now He has broken the bonds of earth, and stands before them in the glorious beauty of His risen Body. So He comes suddenly and unexpectedly to those who love Him and long for Him: no obstacles can keep Him away; no intervening ties can separate Jesus from the souls that are dear to Him and He to them.

3. Jesus came to His Apostles when the doors were shut. The cares and troubles and dangers of the world were shut out. This is the only means of drawing Christ to us. He does not make His Voice heard amid the world's din. We must shut the doors of our senses if Christ is to come and be our guest.

Wednesday in Third Week after Easter.

18.—The First Appearance of Jesus to the Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 30—39.

1. It was late when Jesus appeared to the Apostles. Not in the early morning as to St. Mary Magdalen, not in the mid-day as to St. Peter, but in the evening. Why was it? It was because the Apostles had forsaken Him in the hour of need. They all fled in the Garden of Gethsemani. Only St. Peter and St. John had followed to the house of Caiphas; all the rest had been timorous and faint-hearted. Jesus treats us as we treat Him; love begets love. Every act of love done for Him earns a generous reward in this life, and also in the next. If we neglect Him, we must expect Him to neglect us.

2. Yet they had not forgotten Him. Their hearts were full of love to Him, and it was for Him that they were now suffering; it was on account of Him that they had been sad during this mournful triduum spent in the solitude of the guest-chamber. He therefore would not let the sun go down without coming to console them. He is so grateful for every thought of Him, and so ready to forget every unkindness.

3. At first they did not recognize Him. It could not be a human body which had thus passed through the closed doors. They supposed that they saw a spirit, or a phantom of their Master. Men will not believe in the wonders that the love of Jesus is ready to work for those who love Him. He is ready to do for us far greater wonders than He wrought for His Apostles. He is ready to break down all the barriers that sloth and idleness and sin have raised in our souls.

Thursday in Third Week after Easter.

19.—The Words of Jesus to His Apostles.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 38—45.

1. Jesus does not like to see His friends in fear, and troubled at His presence, on the very day of His Resurrection; and with cheering words He hastens to reassure them: "Peace be to you: it is I; fear not. Why are you troubled?" He seems almost pained at their inability to realize that it is He Himself. How He desires confidence from us: that we should recognize Him, trust Him, feel at home with Him. He does not like us to be afraid of Him: He likes to be treated by us with a sort of reverent familiarity as our dearest Friend, our Brother, the Lover of our souls.

2. How soothing His words are: "Peace be to you!" This is His first greeting to His Apostles after He has fought the battle and conquered. He knew the necessity of peace as an element, or rather as the foundation, of holiness. The troubled soul cannot reflect the image of God. As long as there is strife within, we shall never overcome our enemies or do good service to the Captain of our salvation. Pray then for peace. *Dona nobis pacem!* Give us true peace, such peace as Christ brought to His Apostles after His Resurrection.

3. What He especially desired to impress upon them was that He was the same Jesus who had been their companion during the three years of His ministry, and who had been scourged and crucified. They seemed to imagine He was a different being, and that now He would lose all sympathy with them. Is not this often our danger? We scarcely believe that Jesus in Heaven has the same compassionate, gentle Heart as when He was on earth.

Friday in Third Week after Easter.

20.—Jesus shows His Sacred Hands and Feet.

Read St. John xx. 19, 20.

1. When our Lord appeared after the Resurrection, His Sacred Hands and Feet and Side still bore the wounds made by the nails and spear. They were like no other wounds; they in no way disfigured His Sacred Body: on the contrary, they shone like jewels of dazzling brilliancy. So, too, the martyrs of Jesus will to all eternity be decorated with each wound they suffered on earth, as with an ornament; and all who have mortified their bodies for His sake will have an additional beauty in body and soul alike in Heaven.

2. Our Lord was not ashamed of these marks of His humiliation, of His shame and outrage and degradation. He rejoiced in them. They were the scars in the battle by which He had won Heaven for His elect; the trophies of victory over sin and Satan. We cannot win the battle without humiliation, shame, and bearing His reproach. How we ought to rejoice when we are thought worthy to share in any way His sufferings, knowing that we shall thereby earn a share in His triumph!

3. Our Lord points out to His Apostles these proofs that it is He Himself, Jesus of Nazareth, in no way changed. He goes still further, and to convince them of His human nature He asks for some food, and eats before them. He shows a wonderful condescension for their weakness and their incredulity. He is determined to put them at their ease, and leaves no means untried to win their confidence and love. In much the same way He has treated me, and won me in spite of myself.

Saturday in Third Week after Easter.

21.—The Mission of the Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 20—23.

1. Our Lord had come not merely to bring peace to His Apostles, and to fill their hearts with lightness and with joy; this supernatural happiness was intended only as the prelude to the work He was going to entrust to them. First, peace for themselves, and after that they were to go forth as the messengers of peace to others. First, a firm faith for themselves, and then they were to carry that faith to others. We shall never do much to benefit the souls of others until we have ourselves put into practice the counsels that we give to others.

2. In these words: "As My Father sent Me, I also send you," Jesus gave to His Apostles their future mission and the powers necessary thereto. What are these powers? They are no other than those that the Eternal Father had bestowed upon His Divine Son. What a respect and reverence we ought to have for priests, since they are the vicegerents of Jesus Christ Himself.

3. If priests thus receive graces corresponding to those bestowed on the Son of God, they have corresponding responsibilities. They must obey as Christ obeyed, they must be servants of all as Christ was, they must be willing to sacrifice themselves as Christ sacrificed Himself; and not priests only, but all who aspire to be apostles must remember that their model and type in dealing with those to whom they minister was He Who was meek and humble of heart, Who came not to do His own will, but the will of God.

Third Sunday after Easter.

22.—The Powers bestowed on the Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 23.

1. Jesus now proceeded to announce to the Apostles their priestly and sacrificial powers. The latter had indeed been given at the Last Supper in the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me." Now it is confirmed in the words, "As My Father sent Me, so I send you." Christ was sent to offer a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The Apostles were sent to offer the same sacrifice —to carry on to the end of time in themselves and their successors the Sacrifice of Calvary.

2. They also received the power to forgive sins. The Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins—not only to declare the sinner loosed from his sins, but to loose him. How many a sinner knows by experience the consoling influence of the sacrament so justly called the Sacrament of Consolation! How many a broken heart has there found relief from a sorrow that was too hard for human heart to bear! Thank God for it with all your heart.

3. Our Lord in conferring these apostolic and priestly powers breathed upon His Apostles, as the sign that He was bestowing upon them the same Spirit that had breathed in Him. The Spirit of God was upon Him, to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives. The same Spirit breathes now throughout the Catholic Church, not in her priests alone, but in all her children who seek to carry on the work of Jesus. On all there rests the same Holy Spirit, giving life and power to their prayers, their words, their deeds.

Monday in Fourth Week after Easter.

23.—The Second Appearance of Jesus to the assembled Apostles.

Read St. John xx. 24—29.

1. One of the Apostles, St. Thomas, had been absent when Jesus first appeared to them. When the rest announced the visit of their Master, Thomas would not believe them, and declared that he would remain incredulous till he had actually put his finger into the Sacred Wounds of our Lord's Hands and Feet, and thrust his hand into His Side. Men fancy that in early days the followers of Christ were ready to accept every marvel without question, but what modern sceptic could be more sceptical than Thomas? He had heard the ancient prophecies, the repeated predictions of our Lord, the united testimony of the Apostles, yet he would not believe. Pray for a loyal readiness to believe.

2. Our Lord had waited eight days before again visiting His Apostles. He was preparing them for His final departure from them—training them to remember Him whom they saw not. This is always a great mark of affection—to bear in mind a friend in his absence. Do I thus remember Him from one Communion to another, the one preparing for the other, and its sweet memory lasting on in my heart?

3. When our Lord had greeted His Apostles, He called St. Thomas to Him, and told him to touch His Hands and Feet and Side, and thus learn to believe. What wonderful condescension! God does not generally let men dictate their conditions of belief. But Jesus, though now triumphant, is still full of compassion, meek and gentle of heart, patient, forbearing, and forgiving.

Tuesday in Fourth Week after Easter.

24.—St. Thomas's Profession of Faith.

Read St. John xx. 28—30.

1. When St. Thomas heard the Voice of Jesus and saw Him with his eyes, he needed no further confirmation of his faith. Humbly he falls upon his knees and acknowledges his Divine visitor to be indeed his Lord and his God! What a grace the presence of Jesus brings with it! All the obstinacy and incredulity of St. Thomas vanishes at once under that holy influence. So, too, in Holy Communion, difficulties and obstacles to our advance in virtue often fade away, and what is more, our own scepticism and hardness melt under His Sacred Presence.

2. "My Lord and my God!" In these words there is a very clear testimony to the Divinity of Jesus Christ. It is an expression we should often repeat to Him. Before the Blessed Sacrament we should cry again and again, "My Lord and my God!" If doubts against faith trouble us, we should repeat these words with all the energy we can command. Above all, when we receive Holy Communion we should cry out to our Divine guest, "My Lord and my God!"

3. Our Lord's answer to St. Thomas's act of faith was to remind him that there was a far higher faith than his. St. Thomas's faith was of that lower kind that will only believe when the senses bear witness to some invisible power of God working in the visible world; but the higher and nobler faith believes in the testimony of God, and does not need the evidence of sense. Pray that you may have a lively faith in things you do not see, and that you may not be slow to believe.

Wednesday in Fourth Week after Easter.

25.—The Fishing of the Apostles.

Read St. John xxi. 1—4.

1. After the second appearance to the Apostles, our Lord did not for some time again manifest Himself to them. During this interval they did not remain idle. Under Peter's guidance, they go up to the Lake of Tiberias, and once more fetch out their nets and set out to fish in the lake. After all their gifts and privileges, they did not regard it as beneath them to undertake once more their humble craft. This is a great sign of grace—when high dignity does not lead a man to think great things of himself, but rather to love a humble occupation.

2. St. Peter naturally takes the lead. His fall has left no trace of discouragement: he does not allow it to palsy his action; there is no morbid depreciation and reproach of self, now he has learnt not to think about self, but about what Christ would wish him to do. The other Apostles, too, follow him with simple and docile readiness. His denial of Christ has left no trace upon their minds. This is what pleases God—that the sinner, when once he has made a good act of contrition, should behave as if he had never fallen. When he does this, God takes away from the minds of others the remembrance of his fall.

3. All night long the Apostles take nothing. Long ago our Lord had promised them that henceforth they should be fishers of men; and their long disappointment in their craft seemed to foreshadow that they must expect many such disappointments in seeking to bring into the net of Christ the souls of men. We, too, must expect often to fail; we must not give up when we seem to labour in vain.

Thursday in Fourth Week after Easter.

26.—The Appearance of Jesus at the Lake.

Read St. John xxi. 4—6.

1. As the day began to dawn, the Apostles looked up and espied a figure standing upon the shore of the lake, in which they were wearily dragging their nets. Who could this stranger be? He accosts them, and asks whether they have any fish in their boat; and they sadly answer: No! In spite of all our toil we find no results. How often we seem, in our prayers, in our work for God and for the souls of others, to obtain no results! All the time seems wasted: nothing to show for it, nothing but fruitless labour and constant failures.

2. The stranger calls again to them: "Cast your nets upon the right side of the ship, and you shall find." The Apostles, with the instinct of obedience, at once follow His directions, and their obedience brings, as its result, a plentiful haul of fish. It is always better to take the advice of another than to follow our own devices; the very fact of submission brings a blessing with it. He who follows the counsel of another, especially if his adviser has any position of authority, shows true prudence, and earns the blessing of God upon his work.

3. This unexpected and marvellous success at once suggests to St. John that the stranger can be none other than Jesus. St. John was pure in heart. He did all with a pure intention; and his Master was ever present to his thoughts. This was the reason why he recognized Him so quickly. It is a great mark of love for Jesus if every piece of good fortune reveals Him to us; if we see Him in all, and recognize Him as the author of all the success to which we attain.

Friday in Fourth Week after Easter.

27.—St. Peter hastens to Jesus.

Read St. John xxi. 7.

1. When St. John's instinct of love had recognized his Master, St. Peter's impulse of love prompted himself to throw himself into the sea and hasten to His feet. Through the waves and troubled waters, he made his way boldly to the shore where Jesus was calling him. So through the waves and troubled waters of life, the soul that loves Jesus makes its way to Him. He who fixes his eye on Jesus, and thinks only of coming nearer to Him, is always safe.

2. How different is St. Peter's action now from the spirit he formerly displayed! On the occasion of the miraculous draught of fishes, he cried, "Depart from me; I am a sinful man." Now he hastens to Jesus. What has worked the change? Then he was honest, brave, faithful, but full of self; now his humiliation has cast out self-love, and, instead of thinking of his own sins, he thinks only of Jesus. This is what Jesus loves—that we should forget ourselves, and think only of Him.

3. St. Peter casts about him the coat of the fisherman—the symbol of the authority of the Supreme Pontiff. The official documents of the Holy Father are given under the seal of the Fisherman. None except those who wear the ivery of the Fisherman are recognized by Jesus as fishers of men. This is why the sermons, missions, and Bible-readings outside the Church are so feeble in their influence for good; they are not stamped with the seal of the Fisherman. I must thank God that I live a servant and a follower of the Fisherman.

Saturday in Fourth Week after Easter.

28.—The Easter Banquet.

Read St. John xxi. 9—13.

1. When the Apostles had brought their boat to land with the splendid haul of fish which they had taken, they found that Jesus had already made preparations for them. They bring the fish they had taken, broil some of them, and then Jesus and His disciples sit around the fire, and in the peaceful quiet of the shores of the lake they eat together their Paschal meal. What a happy feast must that have been! No banquet in the palace of kings half so joyful!—their hearts intoxicated, not with wine, but with the inebriating delights of companionship with Jesus, and drinking in His sacred words with a rapture like that of Paradise.

2. This time they knew well, one and all, that it was Jesus Who was with them. The success of their fishing had suggested that it was He; the overflowing joy of their hearts testified to His presence. Even if their eyes had failed to bear witness to His being their Lord, still they would not have doubted. The time of unbelief and hardness of heart was over. Now they had entered on their inheritance of undoubting faith that He whom they now saw in the beauty of His Sacred Humanity was the same Jesus who suffered and died on the Cross. How happy it is for us when God gives us this intimate assurance of Jesus' presence!

3. In Holy Mass, we are quite as certain that Jesus is present, as the Apostles were by the Lake of Tiberias. Every Catholic knows that it is the Lord who has come to feed us—nay, to be Himself the food of our souls. Should not our hearts then burn within us at every Mass, if we really appreciate the fact of His Divine Presence?

Fourth Sunday after Easter

29.—The Questioning of St. Peter.

Read St. John xxi. 15—17.

1. After they had dined, our Lord addressed to St. Peter a question which was to introduce the conferring upon him of that power which is the central doctrine of Catholic Christianity. He asked Him, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" As his station was to be the most lofty in the Christian Church, so Christ expected of him a love beyond all the rest. How important it is for us to remember that every sort of authority requires a higher personal standard on our part. Priests, parents, masters, employers, each in his or her degree, ought to love more than others, in order to be fit for the position in which God has placed them.

2. Peter did not venture to say that he loved more than the rest, but modestly answered, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." These words came from the bottom of his heart; he had always loved our Lord fondly and faithfully; even in his denial he still loved Him in his heart. I too, who have so often fallen, will say to Jesus, over and over again, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Especially as I kneel before the Blessed Sacrament, I will exclaim constantly, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

3. In return for his love, and as the best means of proving it, Jesus bids His Apostle, "Feed My lambs," or, more literally, "Be Shepherd of My lambs." This is the greatest privilege Christ can bestow—to entrust to any, in whatever capacity, the care of the souls of others. How have I fulfilled His trust? Have I fed His lambs with tender care?

Monday in Fifth Week after Easter.

30.—The Charge to St. Peter.

Read St. John xxi. 17.

1. A second and a third time Jesus puts the same question to St. Peter—"Lovest thou Me?" How anxious He is for our love! This is one of the mysteries of the love of Jesus, that He actually longs that I should love Him, and is athirst for my love. What wonderful condescension for the King of kings to be eager for the affection of a poor worm like me! Yet so it is. I must take Him at His word, and give Him all the love of my heart to satisfy His Divine love for me.

2. Each time in answer to Peter's reply Jesus again confirms his appointment made long before, to be the first Pastor of the flock of Christ. Note that He says each time, "Feed *My* lambs, feed *My* sheep." They are not Peter's, but Christ's. So we must remember that if we are in any authority, our subjects are not ours, but Christ's; our children, servants, pupils, are His, and to Him we shall have to give account for our treatment of them.

3. The third time that St. Peter was asked the question he was grieved. The triple question reminded him of his triple denial of Jesus, and besides it seemed as if Jesus doubted his love. But it was not so. Jesus saw into his heart and knew the love that burnt there: He desired to elicit from St. Peter a fresh declaration of his love. Christ is pleased to hear us repeat again and again the protestations of our love: "Lord, Thou knowest all things: Thou knowest that I love Thee."

Tuesday in Fifth Week after Easter.

31.—The Appearance of Jesus in Galilee.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 16—18.

1. Jesus had summoned the Apostles by the mouth of the holy women to repair to Galilee, and had promised to meet them there; and in accordance with His promise He appeared to them in the place and at the time He had appointed. Why did He make them travel to the mountains far away, when He might just as easily have appeared to them at Jerusalem? It was to teach them obedience, and to teach us the same. Our Lord seems to impose arbitrary commands on us, to lead us by strange paths; because it is important before all else that we should be trained in blind obedience and in the renunciation of our own will and judgment which are so sure to lead us astray.

2. Some had doubted before when He first appeared, but now one and all believed. They had learned their lesson at last. Even the sceptic Thomas was now fully convinced; he had made his act of faith and submission when he cried, "My Lord and my God!" Now, as soon as Christ appeared they all adored Him. Now it was a real joy to them to fall prostrate at His feet and offer Him supreme homage. So now, when the bell rings and He is present on the altar, it should be the source of joy to us.

3. Jesus confirms and awards their faith by a declaration of His Omnipotence. To Him as man is given universal dominion. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He, our Lord and our God, has all power in Heaven and earth. Why then should we fear?—why do we not trust Him as we ought?

Wednesday in Fifth Week after Easter.

32.—The Scene upon the Mount in Galilee.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 16.

1. Let us picture the scene on the mountain in Galilee—Thabor it may be or some other mountain not far from the Lake of Tiberias; a number of persons are making their way thither over the hills around, in groups of two and three, until they arrive at the summit of the mount. There they gather in a circle and wait. We notice St. Peter taking the lead as their appointed head, St. John rapt in silent contemplation, St. James kneeling in prayer by his side, St. Thomas making acts of faith, Nathaniel with his guileless soul full of joyful expectancy. All at once in the centre of the group another figure is seen—one like to the Son of Man, in the beauty and majesty of His glorified Humanity, but with the glory still subdued, lest mortal eyes should be dazzled by its brilliancy.

2. At once they all fall upon their faces and adore Him, paying Him supreme homage as their Lord and God. What overflowing happiness fills their hearts! It is Heaven begun. Jesus our Master! Jesus our Lord! Jesus our Saviour! Jesus our God! How their hearts go out to Him. Then He bids them rise, and looks round with sweet looks of love on each and all.

3. Then He speaks to them. No music ever so sweet as the sound of His voice. To listen to Jesus is supreme happiness for them. Each word thrills through their souls; they treasure them up as jewels. So come and speak to us, O Lord, Thy unworthy disciples, who desire to have Thee always with us, and hear Thy Voice.

Thursday in Fifth Week after Easter.

33.—The Apostolic Commission.

Read St. Matt. xxviii 19, 20.

1. Our Lord's all-embracing power was not given to Him for Himself alone, or merely that He might crush His enemies under His feet. As He had taken human flesh for our sakes, for our sakes had been crucified and risen again, so for our sakes all power was given to Him in Heaven and in earth. It is that He might through His Apostles and their successors reap the fruits of the redemption that He wrought for us. Thus even in His triumph Christ appears as our minister, as serving us. He cannot shake off the character which He expressed in saying that the Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister. Even in Heaven He tells us that He will serve those who served Him faithfully on earth. (St. Luke xiv. 15.)

2. "Going, therefore, teach all nations." In these words Christ again communicates His power to His Apostles, confirming His former words, "As My Father sent Me, so I send you." It is the greatest mark of love, to desire to communicate to others the best gift given to us. So the Lord of Heaven and earth gives, as far as He can to sinful man, the wondrous power that was given to Him, that they may go and carry out His work and earn a share in His reward.

3. The Apostles are sent to make disciples of all nations. All are to be subject to Christ; the Christian Church is to be Catholic. There is no distinction with Him of race or blood or nationality. Take care that you imitate His universal charity, and beware of the narrow spirit that despises other countries and races.

Friday in Fifth Week after Easter.

34.—The Work intrusted to the Apostles.

Read St. Matt. xviii. 15—20; St. Luke xxiv. 46—48.

1. Our Lord sums up the tasks intrusted to the Apostles mainly under three heads: They were to be witnesses all over the world of the reality of the Life, and Death, and Resurrection of Christ. "You are witnesses," He says, "of these things." Before Jews and Gentiles, among those who had never heard the name of Christ, before kings and rulers, they were to be witnesses for Christ; never flinching before reproach, outrage, imprisonment, torture, death; everywhere confessing Christ crucified. Am I such a witness for Christ, even where I have to suffer for my loyalty?

2. They were to administer, in Christ's name, the Sacraments of the Church, especially Baptism in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and Penance for the remission of sins. These were to be the channels of the grace of God, the means of applying to the souls of all who should receive them the merits of Christ. We cannot overrate the dignity and importance of the Sacraments through which the treasures of God's love flow into our souls.

3. They were to teach those whom they converted, to observe all things that Jesus had commanded them. He who keeps every precept of the law except one virtually disobeys the whole of it. He who accepts all the dogmas of the Church with one exception is a heretic and an unbeliever. Do I keep all God's law? or do I mar my obedience by some one wilful act of disobedience?

Saturday in Fifth Week after Easter.

35.—The Promise to the Apostles.

Read St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

1. When our Lord sent out His Apostles to convert the world, their hearts might well quail at the difficulties of the task. They, poor, ignorant, unlearned men, how would they hope to achieve a work so apparently impossible! So their Master makes them a promise, which is one to fill their hearts with confidence and with sure expectation of success. He promises that He will always be with them; that whatever they undertake in His name shall have His Omnipotence to supply for all their weakness. "I am with you always." To us, Christ says just the same. In all that you do for Me I am always with you. What confidence this ought to give us!

2. These words meant more than this: they conferred upon the Church that He founded the promise that He would guide it to all truth; that He, through the Holy Spirit, would always be present to it, to preserve it from the least jot or tittle of error. Other religions wander off into every kind of error, and inconsistency, and contradictions; but the Church founded on the Apostles has the Divine Teacher always present in it. How happy we should be to live under its shelter, and to have it for our guide and teacher!

3. This promise is made to all the successors of the Apostles, to the consummation of the world; popes, and bishops, and priests, each in their own degree, speak with the authority of Christ. "He that hears you, hears Me." How reverently, then, we ought to listen to their words when they teach us the doctrine of Christ.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

36.—The Foundations of the Church.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 44—46.

1. During the forty days that elapsed between the Resurrection and the Ascension, our Lord visited the Apostles from time to time, and sketched out the foundations of the future Church, or, as St. Luke says (Acts i. 3), spoke to them of the Kingdom of God. How much there must have been for them to learn—the doctrine of Infallibility, the whole Sacramental system, the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity and of the Incarnation, the mysteries of the future Resurrection, &c. How happy to have such a Teacher! He is still ready to teach every faithful soul, and to dispel its darkness respecting the mysteries of the Faith.

2. We also read that He opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures. Before this, they had read the prophecies, the psalms, all that told of the Christ to come; but the words had made no impression. Even to the last, they had not recognized in His Life and Death the fulfilment of what had been predicted of the Messias. Yet they were good men, docile, believing in Him. How earnestly, then, we should beg for light when we read the Word of God! how strange are the delusions of the Bible-readers outside of the Church, who fancy that they understand what they read!

3. The eleven Apostles were to be the foundations of the Church; they are represented as such in the Apocalypse. They were all founded in Christ, and the Church was founded in Him. With what confidence we can rest upon the solid foundation which Christ Himself laid before He ascended to Heaven!

Monday in Sixth Week after Easter.

37.—The Parting Advice.

Read Acts i. 1—5.

1. Our Lord, before His Passion, had promised His Apostles they should not be left desolate, but that He would send the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to lead them into all truth. Now that He leaves them, He renews His promise. They had not understood it when it was first made; but now it begins to dawn upon them that some wondrous power was to descend from Heaven, and to fill them with strength, wisdom, prudence, and authority to carry out the task intrusted to them. God never calls men to a work without giving them all the gifts necessary to carry it out. This should be my consolation if I am inclined to despond at my own weakness.

2. But, for this gift they were to *wait*—"Stay in the city till you be endued with power from on high." This was to be their first lesson—to *wait*. It is not an easy lesson. We are so impatient and impulsive! We do not like waiting; we want to go to work at once, to see results without delay. But we must learn the lesson Christ taught the Apostles, and *wait*.

3. To *wait* is the secret of success in spiritual things. Those who are willing to wait, always get what they want. We have always to wait for God's best gifts. All the saints had to wait. Our Lady and St. Joseph, above all, had to wait. Why should we be downcast if we appear to fail? It is only that God is keeping us waiting. "O wait on the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart."

Tuesday in Sixth Week after Easter.

38.—The Final Visit.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 48—50.

1. Our Lord's last appearance to His Apostles was at Jerusalem. He seems to have talked long with them on this occasion, and to have explained to them their future mission. Yet even to the last their notions were confused and hazy, and they still clung to the ideas of a temporal kingdom, and asked, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" So slow are men to be rid of worldly hopes and aspirations, or to recognize that God's Kingdom is not of this world.

2. After our Lord's discourse He led them out as far as Bethany, still conversing with them. How they hang on every word, with a sort of presentiment that He is going to leave them! At length they reach the Garden of Gethsemani and ascend the Hill of Olivet. All at once He is transfigured before their eyes, and a light far brighter than the sun surrounds them; and Jesus in the midst raises His Hand to bless them, as they remain in an ecstasy of joy and fear, and wonder and delight.

3. At the same time they see around them a countless number of angels, and hear the music of Heaven and angelic strains; while in the midst their Lord, now radiant with Divine beauty and glory and majesty, is raised above the ground. The vision of Him makes them forget all else, and ravishes their souls as He pronounces the solemn words of benediction. That one moment was enough to compensate them for all they had suffered. How much more will the first moment of Heaven make all earthly afflictions seem as nothing!

Wednesday in Sixth Week after Easter.

39.—The Ascension.

Read St. Luke xxiv. 51; Acts i. 9.

1. As the Apostles gaze upon their Lord in His Divine beauty, He slowly rises through the air, and the glorious vision fades away from their sight, until at length an intervening cloud hides Him entirely from them. They still stand there gazing upwards. Their hearts, their affections, their hopes, their interests, nay, their very lives, have gone with Him to Heaven. Henceforward they are risen with Christ into Heaven; and so they must seek those things that are above. I did not see Christ ascend, but I know it by faith. Has His Ascension the same influence on my life? Are my thoughts and hopes fixed on heavenly things?

2. Why had Christ left them? Not for His own sake, but for theirs. He might have remained with them if it had been for their advantage; but then they would not have been able to live a life of faith, or to prove their fidelity by their outward remembrance of Him whom they saw no longer. It would be no benefit to us if Christ were still visibly present among us. It would deprive us of the merit of loving Him that is invisible, and believing in Him though we see Him not.

3. Besides, Christ in His wondrous love has not left us. He is present in every church under the Eucharistic species. There we can talk to Him, pray to Him, praise Him, listen to His voice speaking to our souls—everything save see Him with our eyes. One day we shall see Him, and then indeed our joy shall be full.

VENI SANCTE SPIRITUS.

MEDITATIONS FROM THE ASCENSION TO THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

1.—Ascension Day.

The Return of the Apostles to Jerusalem.

1. When the Apostles had received from the Angels the message respecting the future return of Jesus, slowly and in silence they left the spot where they had been gazing in ecstacy after their King and Lord: their thoughts in Heaven, their hearts in Heaven, where they knew that their Master was rejoicing at the right hand of God. They would fain have remained still looking up to the place whither He had gone before them. But they had learned the lesson of obedience, and without hesitation or delay they obeyed the Angels' word.

2. How happy they were! their hearts brimful of joy and delight. Yet they had just lost Him who would, they had hoped, reign as earthly King of Israel. They knew better now. They had learned the true meaning of His promises, and they were content, more than content, to wait for the day in the far future, when He should make His enemies His footstool, and reign over the whole earth, King of kings, Lord of lords. So I must be content to wait for that joyful day, and to live in hope.

3. But the chief source of their happiness was the knowledge that He whom they loved better than life itself had returned to the bosom of His Eternal Father. Theirs was an unselfish joy indeed! What mattered it if they had to suffer persecution and trouble, if Jesus had entered on the reward earned by His Passion and Death? This should be the joy that I must aim at. I must rejoice at the victory of Jesus Christ, and triumph in His glory.

2.—Friday after the Ascension.
The Preparation for Pentecost.

1. When the disciples returned to Jerusalem, they went back to the Cenacle, or upper room, where our Lord had eaten the Pasch with them, and had instituted the Blessed Eucharist. There they spent the next ten days, according to their Master's instructions, in a retreat preparatory to Pentecost. Learn from this the importance of a quiet time alone with God as a condition of receiving from Him signal graces.

2. The disciples, we are told, were all of one mind. There was no jealousy now, no strife, no disagreement. Jesus had left His peace with them. They had learned the lesson of charity and submission; their constant desire was to yield to others, to minister to others. They had now all one heart and one soul, because one Lord, one faith, one end in life. The one object of their ambition was to serve others for love of Him. This perfect harmony is the most certain means of drawing down the Holy Spirit. Do I seek to cultivate it among those with whom my lot is cast?

3. Joined to the disciples in their retreat were our Lady and the holy women. The presence of Mary sanctified them. She was now their Mother. Christ Himself had entrusted them to her. She had become beneath the Cross the Mother of the infant Church; they consulted her, learned from her some of the secrets of Divine love that filled her soul, honoured her with a reverence and a devotion which corresponded to their love for Jesus. O Mary, be thou with me, now and always, as my adviser, my hope, my Lady, and my Queen!

3.—Saturday after the Ascension.
The Means employed.

How did the disciples spend the time of their retreat? We are not left in ignorance here.

1. They were persevering in prayer. If there was one lesson which their Master had taught them again and again, it was the necessity of earnest, persevering, patient prayer. How He had enforced it by command, by parable, by His own example! They had learned the lesson, and now their instinct was to make prayer the chief preparation for the coming of the power from on high. It is prayer that obtains power for us—power over ourselves—power to convert others—wisdom and prudence and all we need.

2. They were always in the Temple. Not only constant at its services, but standing there for long hours in silent supplication. They knew that God was specially present there, and that His ears were specially open to their petitions. So we must be often before the Blessed Sacrament, visiting from time to time the temple where Jesus Himself is truly present. This is the way to obtain graces from Him. This is the way to win His Sacred Heart.

3. They were constantly praising and blessing God. Thus even before the Holy Spirit descended, they had begun to practise as far as they could the occupation of the Saints and Angels in Heaven. They knew that the best form of prayer is an expression of gratitude and love. Yet how much cause they had for natural anxiety. What a battle, and apparently what a hopeless battle before them! Their overflowing love made them full of hope and joy. God will always help those who are continually praising and blessing Him.

4.—Sunday after the Ascension.

The Gifts sought.

I.—The Gift of Understanding.

1. What is the Gift of Understanding? It is the gift that enables him who receives it to appreciate the truth and beauty of all revealed truths, and to comprehend their drift and meaning. It is not like Faith, a simple intellectual assent. It furnishes reasons for making the assent. It enables the intellect to perceive the consistency and the beauty of supernatural truth. I must pray for this gift if I am to be firm in my faith.

2. This Gift of Understanding extends also to practical matters. It gives the power of perceiving the wisdom of what is done by those in authority, and in general of appreciating what is good in the actions of others. This is the reason why good men always judge so leniently and kindly of the actions of those around, and approve the decisions of authority where others condemn them. It is because they have so large a share of the Gift of Understanding.

3. Even after our Lord's Resurrection, His disciples had shown a strange want of understanding of the meaning of His teaching. He Himself had reason to upbraid the eleven Apostles with their incredulity and hardness of heart. He reproached the disciples on the road to Emmaus with their folly and slowness to believe the Scriptures. They needed the Gift of Understanding before they could see their true meaning. Without the teaching of the Holy Ghost, Scripture is a sealed book. Heretics may scratch at the surface, but they cannot make its treasures their own. For this the Gift of Understanding is necessary.

5.—Monday after the Ascension.

II.—The Gift of Wisdom.

1. What is the Gift of Wisdom? It follows on the Gift of Understanding, and gives men a real taste and relish for all that is connected with God and Divine things. It directs their thoughts straight to God, and teaches them to look at everything in the light of God. It makes them love prayer, and spiritual reading, and Holy Mass. It is the most perfect of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and rules and directs the rest as charity does the other virtues.

2. This Gift of Wisdom is exactly proportioned to our charity. In the Saints it produces an utter indifference to all worldly things, to all the pleasures of sense and to all earthly honours; nay, it makes them love mortification and the cross, because their burning charity makes them appreciate the true value of suffering. My God, how little have I of this heavenly wisdom! How little taste for prayer and spiritual things! The reason is my selfishness, my want of charity.

3. In the Gospels we notice how the Apostles, in spite of our Lord's example and teaching, took to the very end of His Sacred Ministry a low and earthly view of the Kingdom He was come to establish, and of their own privileges in it. They thought that it was to be merely a temporal kingdom, that they were to be held in high honour in it; and actually quarrelled among themselves who should be first in it. All their tastes and aspirations were after this world's honour. This was because they had not yet that Gift of Wisdom which would teach them to relish most the things of God, which Gift they were to receive at Pentecost.

6.—Tuesday after the Ascension.

III.—The Gift of Knowledge.

1. The Gift of Knowledge differs from the preceding gifts in that its province is to raise the soul from creatures to the Creator. It enables us to think of God in our daily life, and to make the things around occasions of recalling His presence. It teaches that all the beauty we see in earthly things is but a reflection of the Divine beauty. It was in virtue of this that St. Ignatius declared that all the world around recalled God to him. Am I careful to refer all things to Him?

2. The possession of this Gift of Knowledge is necessary for the salvation of my soul. Those who rest in creatures and fail to pass from them to the Creator, can never hope to enjoy the vision in which the Creator is all in all. I must try and recognize God in all around me more than I do. I must pray for a knowledge of His perfections through the means which He has provided, the beauties of the physical world, the many virtues of the Saints and holy people, from whom I can learn so much.

3. Those who were the companions of our Lord could scarcely fail to be continually reminded of God, while they were the associates of God Incarnate. Yet they did not fully recognize Jesus Christ as God, else they would never have doubted of His Resurrection. Their love for Him was rather a personal and natural one than the devotion due to Him as their Lord and their God. They did not judge rightly of the meaning of what He said and did. How often we are narrow in our views, impatient of what God ordains or permits, for want of this Divine Gift of Knowledge!

7.—Wednesday after the Ascension.

IV.—The Gift of Counsel.

1. The Gift of Counsel contains all that is good in human prudence, but goes beyond it. It depends simply and solely on the will of God, so far as we can ascertain it. It leads us always to pause and turn our thoughts to God before we act. Thus it enables us to avoid precipitation, rashness, inconsiderate impulse. It makes us calm and deliberate, and teaches us never to act in any important matter without seeking guidance from God.

2. Sometimes the Gift of Counsel does more than this. It shows us that it is God's will that we should run counter to what the world considers prudent. So Abraham did when he left his home at God's command. So David did when he went out with sling and stone to fight Goliath. So Judith did when she went to the camp of Holofernes. Some such occasions occur to all. When I know God's will, do I generously set all else aside?

3. The disciples of our Lord do not seem to have had much of the Gift of Counsel during His life St. Peter tried to dissuade Him from His Sacred Passion. St. James and St. John wanted Him to call down fire upon the city which would not receive Him. The disciples in general stopped one who was working miracles in Christ's Name. They rebuked those who brought their children to be blessed by Him. They wanted our Lord to absent Himself from Judæa to avoid the dangers to which He was there exposed. All these were the result of trusting to human prudence instead of the supernatural Gift of Counsel.

8.—Thursday after the Ascension.
V.—The Gift of Piety.

1. The Gift of Piety implants in the soul a loyal, tender, filial affection towards God as our Father. "You have received," says St. Paul (Rom. viii. 15), "the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." This loyalty makes us forget self, it loves to serve God, not as a master, or even as a benefactor, but because it is a joy to us to obey our Father in Heaven.

2. This spirit of loyalty which we thus receive from the Holy Spirit is one of the most powerful, exalted, all-embracing of motives. It puts us on our mettle, and engenders a chivalrous spirit of generous obedience. It makes us serve God with all our heart and soul and strength. If I am a son of God, loyal to my Father in Heaven, how this thought should influence my every act and word and thought.

3. From the first moment that our Lord called the Apostles to follow Him, they had continually entertained a loyal and intense devotion to Him. They had also had the virtue of piety, by reason of which they loved God as their sovereign Lord. But neither of these was the Gift of Piety. The first was a personal affection to our Lord in His Sacred Humanity; the second was a love for God founded upon the Law, not upon the Gospel. The disciples of our Lord had never fully realized the new obligation of filial affection that was the result of our Lord's Incarnation till after His Ascension. God had become their Father in a new sense, and the prayer they were taught by their Master insisted on this first of all. Do I at all realize it?

9.—Friday after the Octave of the Ascension.

VI.—The Gift of Fortitude.

1. The Gift of Fortitude in some degree is absolutely necessary to one who wants to save his soul All Christians are called upon sometimes to endure for religion sufferings for which mere human courage will not suffice. Those who desire a high place in Heaven are called to a hard struggle, and one quite impossible to us in our own strength. Any one may be called on to die for his faith; most are exposed on some occasion in their lives to ridicule, loss of friends, or contempt.

2. The Gift of Fortitude makes easy what would otherwise be difficult or impossible. It helps men to bear with fortitude sufferings otherwise unendurable. It makes feeble women endure torture with joy. It makes those naturally weak strong against all the assaults of Satan; it renders self-denial and self-sacrifice attractive. It sweetens suffering, and makes us content under pain and trouble. O heavenly gift! Grant it to me, O Christ my Lord!

3. The disciples of our Lord exhibited during His life a curious mixture of courage and cowardice. St. Peter had great natural courage, so had St. John, who alone followed our Lord throughout His Sacred Passion. St. Joseph of Arimathæa and St. Nicodemus in their burial of Him were bold and generous. But on the other hand, there had been at the time of His Passion sad weakness. All had deserted Him in the Garden when He was arrested. St. Peter had denied Him; the rest had hidden themselves in fear. Human courage can do little in the face of fierce temptation or sudden alarm. Perhaps I know this by my own experience.

10.—Saturday before Pentecost.

VII.—The Gift of the Fear of the Lord.

1. The Gift of Fear includes not only that fear which is the beginning of wisdom, but a fear which is the completion and perfection of wisdom. It gives to him who receives it a continual dread of any kind of offence against God, even of sins committed thoughtlessly and without full deliberation. It is not a slavish, cowardly, frightened fear, but a loving, reverential, affectionate fear, founded on intense love. It is joined to perfect confidence in God, and flows from a joyful acknowledgment of His complete dominion.

2. The Gift of Fear produces an intense quickness of perception in the soul, so that we see our smallest faults, and lament over them. It makes us dread any approach to sin, anything that could leave the faintest stain upon the soul. It also produces a great fear of any unfaithfulness to grace in matters where there is no question of sin. Why have I so little of this gift? It is because my love is so faint and feeble. Why am I so blind to my faults? It is because I am so careless in guarding against them.

3. The fear of the Lord, says the Wise Man, is the beginning of wisdom, and from the very first those whom our Lord chose to be His Apostles and disciples had this fear already existing in their hearts. They had a reverential dread of the judgments of God. They had a fear of the wrath to come. But this preliminary fear was very different from the fully developed gift they needed in order to be Apostles of Christ to the world. We too, if we are to be apostles of Christ to others, must have this Gift of loving Fear.

11.—Whit Sunday.

The Descent of the Holy Ghost.

1. At length the retreat of the Apostles was over, and they all assembled together to receive the gift that our Lord had promised to send them after His departure from them. He had promised to ask the Eternal Father to send the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, in His Name to remain with them for ever. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity was to come in His seven-fold power, to dwell in the Church of God, and in the hearts of all its faithful members. What a wondrous gift! What a proof of the love of Jesus! He gave the best gift that Heaven itself had to bestow. He gave them the Holy Ghost, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, coequal with the Father and the Son.

2. The Holy Spirit came like a mighty wind, but yet perceived by each and all. Unsearchable like the wind in that no one is able to trace whence He comes and whither He goes, sweeping away all the mists of earth, purifying, refreshing, invigorating. Has He produced these effects in my soul? Have I asked Him to make me more pure and courageous and strong? Have I co-operated with His grace, or have I hindered His holy influences?

3. The Holy Spirit in coming filled the whole house where they had met together. So His presence extends to the whole Church. He speaks first through the Vicar of Christ, then through bishops and priests, and also directly to the individual soul. It is this universal gift that makes the Church of Christ no mere collection of individuals, but the living body of Christ, her Divine Spouse. Thank God for the happiness of being a member of it.

12.—Whit Monday.

The Parted Tongues.

At the same time that the sound of the mighty wind filled the whole house, there appeared something more wondrous still. Parted tongues of fire appeared, and descended on the head of each of the disciples who were present. Why did the Holy Spirit's presence manifest itself under the form of tongues?

1. Because they signified that to each would be given the office of speaking of the things of God, of communicating to others the truth that they had themselves learned. This was the sacred duty to which their whole lives were to be given. So now, on all priests, the same obligation rests, and, in their own degree, on all parents, teachers, all in authority, nay, on every one of the faithful. I too, in Baptism, and still more in Confirmation, have received this obligation of communicating to those around me the sacred truths of the Gospel.

2. The tongues indicated that the Holy Spirit speaks to our hearts, either by His holy inspirations or by the voice of those who have authority to teach us. If I wish to speak and act prudently, I must take Him for my guide. Do I listen attentively to His voice, and obey most faithfully its holy utterances?

3. The tongues were also to remind us that it is our words which will obtain for us justification or condemnation at the Day of Judgment. Our Lord warns us that "by our words we shall be justified, and by our words we shall be condemned." They are the test of the state of our soul. How often I forget this when I let loose my tongue in foolish and uncharitable words.

13.—Whit Tuesday.
The Tongues of Fire.

The tongues which came down from Heaven and rested upon the disciples were tongues of fire. The fire had its own meaning.

1. It was a fulfilment of our Lord's words, "I am come to send fire upon earth," a fire of charity such as had never been kindled before. He brought to man and taught to man a charity without bounds, ready to sacrifice itself even to the death; a charity which loved the sinner and the fallen because they were sinners and fallen; a charity which esteemed it a joy to suffer for others for Christ's sake. Is my charity of this kind? Is it a self-denying charity? Is it a charity which extends even to those whom I dislike?

2. This new fire was a purifying fire, driving out all sin, cleansing the soul of its dross. The fire of Divine Love has a power to consume the gnawing rust of selfishness, and indolence, and jealousy of the success of others. When its work is done, it leaves nothing of spiteful words and hard thoughts and unkind actions; nothing but the love of God remains behind. Purify me, O God, by the fire of Thy love.

3. This fire lighted up the room where the disciples were assembled. It was to communicate its attractive brilliancy to those on whom it descended, both collectively and individually. It is this fire of Pentecost that still illuminates the Church, and makes it draw men of good-will into it. How thankful should I be in that I dwell where the fire of Pentecost ever brightly burns! Around the priest there is a halo belonging to his sacred office; around each individual Catholic there is a light of faith which burns not outside the fold.

4.—Wednesday after Pentecost.

The Effects of Pentecost: the Gift of Languages.

1. As our Lord, when He became Incarnate, brought down Heaven to earth in His own Sacred Person, so, after He returned to Heaven, the Holy Ghost came to plant on earth a tree, the fruits of which were not only designed for the healing of the nations, but were to be a sort of foretaste of the joy of the Saints in Paradise. Jesus Christ had fought the battle and won the victory, and now He sent the Holy Spirit to make the kingdoms of this world the Kingdom of God.

2. These fruits are the graces of the Holy Spirit, some of them gifts given by God according to His good pleasure, apart from individual merits; others requiring man's co-operation, and imparting a new beauty to the individual soul. The Catholic Church is this tree, sprung from the Blood of Jesus, planted by the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, to take firm root, and never to be rooted up, in spite of all the hatred of the wicked and the malice of Satan. How many graces I have received through the Catholic Church!

3. The first of the graces of Pentecost was the power bestowed on the disciples of speaking so that all men, of every nation and tribe, understood them. They thus anticipated the universal language of Heaven. Each one heard his own tongue. To each, therefore, as it seemed, the words of the Apostles were specially directed. "We all hear them speak in our own tongues." The gift of speaking words suitable to all alike is a great grace. God gives to His faithful servants the power of speaking to the hearts of all, so that all can say, "This is meant for me."

15.—Thursday after Pentecost.

The Effects of Pentecost: the Power of Healing.

1. Our Lord had promised that the works that He had done on earth, those who believed in Him should do also. (St. John xiv. 12.) Among these works was the power to raise the dead and to heal the sick. Those on whom the Spirit of God descended performed miracles which even their adversaries could not deny. These miracles still continue; they are the exclusive property of the Catholic Church; they are one of the proofs of the continual presence of the Holy Spirit. Thank God for this, and make an act of faith in the wonder-working power of the Church.

2. The first miracle performed by the Apostles was the healing of the lame man at the gate of the Temple. He who had been a helpless cripple, came walking, and leaping, and praising God. The fact of the miracle was undeniable. "It is manifest," said the Council of the Jews, "and we cannot deny it." They were more honest than modern sceptics, who explain away miracles for which the evidence is just as strong. Pray that you may have none of the sceptical spirit that is so hateful to God.

3. This miracle was worked in the Name of Jesus by the operation of the Holy Spirit, in fulfilment of our Lord's promise, "He shall glorify Me." All true miracles are wrought by the authority and in the Name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. We shall do wonderful things for God if all we do is done in Jesus' Name, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We fail because we act in our own name, and under our own guidance.

16.—Friday after Pentecost.

The Effects of Pentecost: the Commission to Teach.

The result on the Apostles themselves of the descent of the Holy Spirit was that they at once began to proclaim to others the doctrines of Jesus Christ. They could not keep silence. The Holy Ghost dwelling within them spoke through their mouth. Hence they had

1. *Authority in speaking.* On all who listened to them, there came a strange awe. It was not poor, ignorant men whose words were listened to, but a Divine power speaking through them, carrying with it the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is why Catholic priests have an influence no ordinary man possesses. They have authority to teach from God. With what reverence, then, should we listen to them, for the sake of their sacred office.

2. *Power to convince.* It was impossible to resist the force of the Apostles' arguments. They spoke of the things they had seen and heard. Man is born for truth, and God gives him the power of instinctively recognizing truth. Truth has always a strong attraction for men of good-will. If I am such, I shall accept with a joyful spirit of loyalty every truth that the Church teaches.

3. *Force to persuade.* It would not have been enough if the Apostles had power to convince the intellect. The heart must be reached, the will moved to action. This was the effect of St. Peter's first sermon. They that heard it had compunction in their heart, and said to the Apostles, What shall we do? Am I moved by sermons, good books, &c., to do more for Christ? And do I carry out what God suggests to me?

17.—Saturday after Pentecost.
The Effects of Pentecost: the change in the Apostles themselves.

Hitherto we have been dealing with the results of Pentecost on the Apostles, in their official character as messengers of Christ, commissioned to preach the Gospel in all the world. We must now see the change worked in their own souls.

1. They who before had been narrow, selfish, and ready to condemn others, now became full of an overflowing charity to all the world. Into their hearts the Spirit of Love had descended. Their motto henceforth was: *Caritas Christi urget nos*, the charity of Christ is the one motive of all we think, and do, and say. What shall separate us from the love of Christ?

2. They who before were timid, irresolute, almost cowardly, now become as bold and as brave as lions. They challenged the Jewish authorities with a freedom of speech that the Chief Priests were unable to explain, until they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. They faced the wrath of the Sanhedrin undismayed. "If it be just in the sight of God to hear you rather than God, judge ye." Have I the same boldness in advocating the cause of God and His Church and the same superiority to human respect?

3. They who before had shrunk from suffering, now courted suffering, and faced death with joy, by reason of the Spirit of Love, which engendered in them an invincible fortitude, and made them regard it as a privilege to suffer for Christ's sake. How little have I of this spirit! How unwilling am I to suffer! How prone to avoid all that is opposed to my natural inclinations!

18.—Trinity Sunday.

The Mystery of the Blessed Trinity.

1. On the octave of Pentecost we celebrate the most mysterious and the most unsearchable of all the mysteries of faith. How God can be Triune, three Persons in one God, altogether exceeds human comprehension. Even under the light of faith, we have to bow our heads, and confess the inability of the reason to grasp the Divine mystery. Make an act of faith in this mystery, and pray for a humble, childlike, submissive faith.

2. Yet this mystery is not contrary to human reason. There is nothing in it that reason revolts against, no contradiction, nothing that we can call impossible. On the contrary, the denial of it, not the assertion of it, ultimately leads to a contradiction. Thank God that you profess a faith which pre-supposes the full exercise of human reason, and is perfectly consistent with reason, instead of being a member of one of those various sects and false religions which ultimately lead those who profess them into an absurdity.

3. Although the mystery of the Blessed Trinity is beyond the grasp of created intellect, yet those to whom God has vouchsafed in large measure the gift of understanding, see something of its truth, and glory, and harmony, and necessity in the supernatural order. To the Saints it has a simplicity which is the effect of the Divine light that illumines their souls. They penetrate farther than ordinary men into this deepest of all mysteries. and this because of their exalted sanctity. If the truths of Revelation are difficult to us, may it not be, in part at least, due to our own faults?

19.—Monday after Trinity Sunday.
God the Father.

1. The First Person of the Blessed Trinity is the primeval fount whence all else proceeds. "Of Him are all things," says St. Paul. (Rom. xi. 36.) From Him proceed the Divine Word and the Holy Ghost. God the Father is first of the Three Persons, not in the order of existence, since all exist from all eternity, nor in order of dignity, since all are equal, but in order of origin. I, too, am from Him. The Eternal Father has deigned to fashion me. I owe my existence to Him. I depend upon Him in my every movement. In His presence, how can I venture to be independent?

2. To the First Person of the Holy Trinity is especially appropriated the *power* of God. It was by an exercise of His power that He created the world. His Almighty power alone sustains it in being. All the angels are completely subject to His power, and even those who hate Him are utterly helpless in any attempt to resist Him. It is no want of power that causes God to permit the devils to fight against Him; it is in the interest and for the benefit of His saints and servants.

3. The thought of this power of God is very comforting when all seems to go wrong, and the Church is persecuted, and all kinds of accusations are brought against her, and her Supreme Head is robbed of his children by the enemy. In times of weakness we should ever remember the omnipotence of God. The day will come when all His enemies will be made His footstool. Do I rely as I ought, on the power of God, and leave myself in His hands, to do with me as He sees fit?

20.—Tuesday after Trinity Sunday. God the Son.

1. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity proceeds from the Father by an eternal generation. As the coequal and coeternal Son, He is, as it were, the model or pattern whose Divine and infinite perfections are reflected in the works of God. By Him, as Creator of the world, the whole of this physical universe was made. "By Him are all things," says St. Paul. By Him, in the unity of the Father, is the Holy Ghost Himself. Adore this mystery, which surpasses our limited understanding, and pray for a firm faith.

2. To the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity is appropriated the *wisdom* of God. He is continually spoken of in Holy Scripture under the name of Wisdom, or the Word of God. It was thus the Wisdom of God that caused Him to become Man. For us He was made foolishness. For us He not only emptied Himself of His glory, but in the eyes of men He lacked that wisdom which is His special prerogative.

3. It was by the Divine Word that all things were created. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made." Hence, all created things are framed by the Wisdom of God, and are made after His likeness. We ought to respect all things in proportion as they reflect the Divine perfections, even the flowers and the beasts of the field, and above all, man, who bears the image of the Son of God.

21.—The Eve of Corpus Christi. God the Holy Ghost.

1. The Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is the end to which all things tend. He is the Spirit of holiness, and holiness is but another name for likeness to God. And as the end of man is to be conformed to the image of God, in the Holy Ghost all things find their end and their perfection. "In Him are all things," says St. Paul. Am I advancing steadily in this likeness to God which is the gift of the Holy Spirit?

2. To the Holy Spirit is appropriated the *Love* of God. He is nothing else than the mutual Love of the Father and the Son. From them the Holy Spirit proceeds, not only *in virtue of* the love of the Eternal Father for the Word, and of the Word for the Eternal Father, but as *identical with* that love. Thus it is that God is Love, and he who dwells in supernatural charity for others, truly dwells in God the Holy Spirit.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Author of all the gifts of God to His Church. When our Lord ascended, the Holy Spirit came to take His place to lead men into all truth, to dwell in their hearts, to fill them with the fire of His love. All the supernatural gifts in the Church, all the miracles all the graces, come to us from the Holy Spirit of God. In the Church He is ever present, and with it He will always remain. He is present in each of the faithful united to God by supernatural charity. Come then, O Holy Spirit, and pour into my heart Thy gifts of love!

22.—The Feast of Corpus Christi.
The Triumph of Humility.

1. One of the most magnificent of all public ceremonies in Catholic countries is the procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The faithful strain every nerve to show the Blessed Sacrament the greatest possible honour by every kind of external symbol of veneration and love. It is indeed a triumphal procession; music and singing, flowers and lights; triumphal arches and richly-decorated altars are prepared for the King of kings. Rejoice in all these honours shown to your Lord and God.

2. Why is this day chosen out for this peculiar honour? Why is the altar more gaily dressed and more brilliantly lighted than at any other season? It is because God thus rewards the infinite condescension of His Eternal Son. Because Jesus humbled Himself to death, His Sacred Humanity is now exalted in Heaven. Because He humbled Himself still more by taking the form of bread, He is greeted on Corpus Christi day with the jubilant gratitude of those amongst whom He deigns to dwell in this apparent annihilation of all His Majesty. How can I ever thank Him enough for this astonishing mercy?

3. Thus it is that God shows His appreciation of humility and self-abasement. The lower we stoop for God's sake, the higher He will raise us. Yet how little I have of this spirit. I dislike to be humbled, and want to show off my own excellence, and to pretend to a dignity which I do not possess. I dislike it if any virtue I think I possess is overlooked, and if I am treated as of no account. O Lord Jesus, make me more like to Thee!

23.—Friday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

The Motive of Jesus in the Institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

1. What was the motive which induced our Lord to hide Himself under the form of a little piece of bread? In His life on earth He had drunk to the dregs of the cup of humiliation, and when His sufferings were over, the time of His exaltation had come. He was to sit for ever at the right hand of His Father. He had fought the battle and won the victory, and trampled upon Satan's head. It seemed unbecoming to His Divine Majesty that He should descend so low.

2. If it was unbecoming to His Majesty, says St. Bernard, it was not unbecoming to His love. Love is strong as death, and our Lord's love for us was far stronger than death. With Divine ingenuity He had devised a way of satisfying His love that enabled Him to render His Sacrifice a continual one, which should last to the end of the world, and by which He should die mystically for us each day upon the altar. He offered one sacrifice for sins *for ever*. It is not something past and gone, a mere recollection of His Love in the past. It is an ever-present memorial of His eternal love. Would that I could realize more this unceasing, undying love of Christ for me!

3. Each consecrated Host in itself represents the death of Christ. He is present there, motionless, helpless, silent, giving no more sign of life than when His Sacred Body was enclosed in the tomb. He has made Himself thus helpless for love of me. He has once more emptied Himself of all His glory to teach me that even the King of Heaven gives His best gift to men by an infinite humiliation of Himself

24.—Saturday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. Further Proofs of Jesus' Love for us.

1. Our Lord is not satisfied with mystically dying for us day by day upon the altar. He in His unspeakable love must go still further. He must remain in every church all the day and all the night, unable, so to speak, to tear Himself away from those He loves. In spite of all man's base ingratitude and cruel neglect, He still cries out, with that insatiable ardour of His love, "My delight is to be with the sons of men." Was there ever love like His?

2. But His love has not yet exhausted itself. With an extravagant generosity passing our powers of comprehension, He has determined to give Himself to be His children's food, and in so doing, to give them at the same time eternal life. As He Himself says, "He that eateth Me shall live by Me." He desires to unite Himself to us in bonds of the closest union. He desires to be wholly ours, that we may thus become wholly His. Who save a God would ever have devised such a means as this of satisfying His love?

3. What, too, was involved in the adoption of this means? How many frightful insults and outrages inflicted on Him! How many sacrilegious Communions! Sometimes the trampling under foot of the Sacred Host, sometimes still more terrible profanation! Jesus knew to what He was rendering Himself liable when He chose this means of showing His love, and deliberately chose it. O my Jesus, how can I ever love Thee as I ought in return for such love as this!

25.—Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. The Return of Love for Love.

1. We all of us shrink from the charge of ingratitude. Whatever else we may be, we flatter ourselves that we are not ungrateful, that we love those who love us, and seek to repay our benefactors with affection and gratitude, if not with some positive and substantial return for all they have done for us. I should not like to be deemed ungrateful. I should resist the imputation of ingratitude. Yet can I say that I am grateful to Christ Jesus for all His wonderful love to me?

2. True gratitude aims at returning like for like. It is not content to be outdone in generosity. It seeks, if possible, to repay with greater favours the favours shown to it. If I desire to be generous, what sort of return ought I to make to Christ my Lord for giving Himself to me in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar? Can I ever do enough for Him in return for what He has done for me? What sacrifice that I can make is more than an infinitesimal part of what I ought to do for Him?

3. Gratitude requires of us that if we cannot surpass our benefactor in liberality, we should at least be on a level with him. Is it possible ever to come up to the generosity of Jesus Christ in humbling Himself for my sake to the form of a little piece of bread? If for millions of years I were to sacrifice to Him health, comfort, reputation, I should still not have done a million-millionth part of all He has done for me. What can I do? I can simply tell Him that I will give Him myself and all I have, and that I would fain give more.

26.—Monday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. Grace increased by the Blessed Sacrament.

1. Our Lord's desire to be with us and to unite us to Himself cannot be for His own sake. It is simply in order to promote our happiness that He has instituted the Blessed Sacrament. He loves to see His children happy, and His one object in the Sacrament of His love is that He may have the happiness of seeing us happy. It was for this that He instituted the Blessed Eucharist; it is for this that He continues to abide in the Tabernacle and to give Himself to us. What greater proof can He give us than this of His devoted love and unselfish generosity?

2. But how does the Blessed Sacrament promote our happiness? It is the means appointed by Almighty God to increase in us continually that sanctifying grace on which our happiness in Heaven depends. Each time we receive Holy Communion in good dispositions, this wondrous channel of grace pours fresh grace into our hearts, makes us more beautiful in God's sight, more fit for the company of the Angels and Saints in Heaven. How greatly, then, ought I to value Holy Communion!

3. The Blessed Sacrament does more than this. It also of Itself obtains for us actual graces. Those who often receive Holy Communion have more inspirations from Almighty God, and more help to avail themselves of them. Each such inspiration, if accepted, will add to our happiness both here and in Heaven to all eternity. Especially after receiving It God gives actual graces that He does not give at other times, and inspirations enabling us to know and do His will. While Jesus is our Guest, present within us, He cannot refuse to give us all we ask.

27.—Tuesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi
Sin blotted out by the Blessed Sacrament.

What is it that hinders our happiness and our union with God? Naught else but sin. If sin could be taken away, all misery would disappear with it. If our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament desires to make us happy, it follows that our past sins are thereby blotted out and the power of sin weakened or destroyed. How does it do this?

1. It excites in us acts of contrition and love, and each such act helps to cleanse our souls from sin. A perfect act of love is incompatible with any deliberate attachment even to any venial sin, and every act of love diminishes the attachment and washes away the guilt. Hence remember to make many acts of contrition and of love in presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and whenever you receive Holy Communion.

2. Moreover, whenever we receive Holy Communion in good dispositions, the mere fact of worthy reception has the same effect. Even if anything hindered us from acts of love and contrition, the fact of the presence of our Lord cancels sin, and helps to remove the obstacle that it places in the way of our love for God. What a reason this is for frequent Communion.

3. In both these ways, by the mere fact of reception and the acts of contrition and love which It engenders in us, Holy Communion also takes away the temporal punishment of sin, and shortens the time of our Purgatory. Each good Communion of itself blots out some of the penalty still due to God's justice. How wonderful are the effects of Holy Communion! How grateful we should be for it!

28.—Wednesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

The Effects of Holy Communion.

The Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is not only a remedy for sin in the past, but also a preventive of sin in the future.

1. It gives strength against temptation. It is essentially the food of the strong; the food that imparts strength even to the weakest. We need not be discouraged by our own weakness while we have such a resource as this. It will enable us to overcome every possible temptation. God puts a weapon into our hands with which we must needs conquer. Do I make use of it as I ought?

2. It also allays concupiscence. It is the great remedy against luxury and impurity. It takes away the overwhelming force with which the allurements of the flesh attack us, and gives us power to resist them, however violent they may be. Frequent Communion is sometimes the only means of saving a man from falling into grievous sin. Thank God for giving us so effective a means of keeping faithful to Him.

3. It also curbs and checks the assaults of the devil. Those who commit sin at other times are often entirely free from his attacks on the day when they receive Holy Communion. Sometimes indeed the day of Communion brings with it stronger temptations, but when this is so, grace enough, and more than enough, is given to ensure a complete victory. Trust then in Holy Communion with implicit confidence, and you will never have any grievous falls, if you are vigilant and do your part.

29.—Octave of Corpus Christi.

The Chief Ends of Holy Communion.

1. The Blessed Eucharist is above all the Sacrament of love. It is not only the abiding proof of our Lord's incredible love for us, but the chief means by which we are enabled to do something to return love for love. In it we can show our love to God by offering to Him a sacrifice which is far more pleasing to Him than all the sacrifices which the whole of mankind can offer—the sacrifice of His Divine Son. This we can do each time we hear Mass. This we can do still more when we receive Holy Communion and offer ourselves to Christ who is our Guest, as a mark of our love to God.

2. The Blessed Eucharist is also primarily and above all a fount of love within us. As oil nourishes fire, so does Holy Communion nourish our love to God. As fire without fuel soon becomes faint and dim, so our love cannot remain bright and strong unless its flame is fed with the fuel of the Body and Blood of Christ our Lord. As He Himself says: "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you have no life in you."

3. The Blessed Eucharist is also a fount of love to man. Whence do the saints derive their supernatural charity, if not from Holy Communion? What else made them patient, meek, forbearing, loving, kind, self-sacrificing? Was it not Jesus who comes to dwell with them, and who gave them the commandment that they should do for others what He had done for them. Do I derive from Holy Communion this all-embracing charity?

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS.

MEDITATIONS ON THE PUBLIC LIFE OF OUR LORD.

First Week: Sunday.

The Baptism of Jesus.

St. Matt. iii. 13—17.

Our Lord bids farewell to His holy Mother; makes His way to the Jordan; is baptized by St. John amid a crowd of sinners, and is proclaimed by the Voice from Heaven the Beloved Son of God.

1. For thirty years Jesus had dwelt in sweet companionship with His holy Mother. Never since the world began had there been any intercourse so full of unspeakable delight as that of Jesus and Mary. Now the time had come to break the bond: it was like the tearing asunder of their loving hearts for them to part. Yet Christ goes on His way with the greatest cheerfulness and joy: for it was the will of God that He should forsake His Mother, and the motto of His life was: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O My God."

2. It is the same Divine guidance that leads Him to the Jordan, to be baptized among sinners, just as if He, the Lamb of God, were Himself a sinner. Yet He never hesitates for an instant. It was the will of God, and therefore it is His greatest joy to do what men would esteem so misleading and ill-judged, so fatal to the success of His future Mission. Do I thus implicitly obey the will of God?

3. Obedience and humility are the surest way of winning honour from God. He loves to exalt the humble, to pour Divine gifts upon the obedient. A Voice from Heaven declares Him Who had thus humbled Himself to be the well-beloved Son of God. The Holy Spirit descending in visible form proclaims wisdom to be the special privilege of the obedient.

First Week: Monday.

His Fasting.

St. Matt. iv. 1.

After His Baptism, our Lord was driven by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. Previously to the temptation He had fasted for forty days and forty nights, and dwelt among wild beasts.

1. It was under the impulse of the Holy Spirit that our Lord went out into the desert to be tempted. Men often think that when temptations assail them it is their own fault or a punishment for their sins, and lose courage accordingly. They forget that may be the Holy Spirit is guiding them in the same path in which He guided the Son of God: that they are but following in His sacred footsteps. Temptation is not only permitted by God, but He ordains it for the greater sanctification of His elect.

2. Our Lord prepared for His temptation by a long fast. Did He need it as a means of overcoming the rebellion of nature? How could He, the spotless Lamb of God, whose Human Nature was joined in closest union to the Divinity, need any aid to repel the assaults of Satan? No, it was for my sake. It was that I might have strength to overcome, it was to earn graces for me that I see Him pale and faint and wan after His long and painful fast.

3. He was with the wild beasts, in solitudes far removed from all human intercourse, among animals wild and savage, who were, however, obedient unto Him as their Master and King. Christ as Man was Lord of all creation. It was sin that made the brutes our enemies. No creature on earth can really harm us except by reason of sin. To those who love God all things work together for good.

First Week: Tuesday.

His Temptation.

St. Matt. iv. 2—11.

At the end of forty days Satan comes to Jesus, disguised, it is said, as one of the hermits who lived in the neighbourhood of the Jordan, and pours into His ears his infernal suggestions of sin.

1. How utterly repulsive to the Son of God must have been the presence of the evil one. He Who had been nursed in Mary's bosom, and carried in the faithful arms of His dear foster-father St. Joseph, now allowed Himself to be borne hither and thither by the being whom He loathed and hated with His whole soul. This was indeed a painful beginning of His Sacred Ministry.

2. Why did Christ allow Himself to be tempted? Did He not already know perfectly every wile and deceit of Satan? Yes, He knew them, but not by experience. He wanted us to have the consolation of knowing that He suffered being tempted; that He endured the misery of being haunted with the foul suggestions of Hell: and that therefore He, the sinless Lamb of God, knows how to succour those who are assailed by Satan's evil suggestions. With what confidence, then, can I appeal to Him to aid me when I am tempted!

3. Observe our Lord's manner of dealing with the tempter. There is no arguing with him, no discussion. Our Lord deals with the enemy promptly, boldly, firmly, with decision. Sharp and clear is His answer, and very unmistakeable is the rebuff given to His assailant. When Christ says, "Get thee hence,' Satan is glad to leave Him. So we should meet temptation, promptly, boldly, fearlessly, and then Satan will be glad to leave us.

First Week: Wednesday.

The Lamb of God.

St. John i. 29—34.

St. John the Baptist, seeing our Lord approaching, cries aloud: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world."

1. The name by which St. John first greeted Jesus was that of the Lamb of God. All names given in Scripture by Divine inspiration are exactly descriptive of those on whom they are conferred. Hence we learn that the prominent feature in our Lord's character is the gentleness, meekness, simplicity, guilelessness of the lamb. This is what made Him so attractive. His sweetness drew all to Him. He is just the same now. In Heaven He is still the Lamb; still gentle and loving as ever. With what confidence, then, I ought to approach Him and tell Him all my troubles.

2. He is not only the Lamb, but the Lamb *of God*. That winning gentleness and sweetness of His is not merely natural. It is the Divine charity manifesting itself in the Son of God. This must be the sweetness and gentleness at which we must aim. God will give it to all of us if we persevere in seeking it. Even though by nature harsh, God can make us gentle and meek.

3. What was the office of the Lamb of God, the work He was sent to do? St. John tells us that it was to take away the sins of the world. Meekness has a wonderful power—"the meek shall possess the land." Meekness takes away sin. To bear reproaches meekly is one of the best means of expiating our own sins and the sins of others, and obtaining for sinners the grace of repentance. Meekness obtains peace for our souls. Alas! how little there is in me of the meekness and gentleness of the Lamb of God!

First Week: Thursday.

The First Disciples.

St. John i. 35—42.

St. Andrew and another of St. John's disciples, hearing their master's words respecting Jesus, follow Him. Andrew afterwards brings his brother Simon to Him, saying: "We have found the Messias."

1. St. John, the first preacher of the Gospel, is a model to all preachers. (*a*) He preaches Jesus. Jesus is the centre of his doctrine. His one object is to turn the hearts of his hearers to Jesus. (*b*) He preaches Jesus under the sweetest and most attractive aspect of "the Lamb of God." He sought to make Jesus the object of their love by dwelling on His gentleness and kindness. (*c*) He does not think of himself. He is only too glad that all his disciples should leave him to follow Jesus. So St. Paul: "We preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus our Lord." Do I in my words and actions forget self and think of Jesus?

2. This kind of teaching soon bears fruit. First one, then another, of his disciples follows the Lamb of God. Our words are sure to bear fruit if they are filled with the love of Jesus. St. John had the happiness of seeing the fruit of his labours; and so in this world or in the world to come will all who point to Jesus, preach Jesus, make Jesus loveable in the eyes of men.

3. One conversion brings another. St. Andrew brings to the fold of Christ his brother Simon, the future Pope, the Rock on which the Church of Christ was to be built. Thus it is with all who obey the voice of their conscience. They are sure to convert others, and insensibly to influence them for good. What happiness for us if we bring only one soul to Jesus!

First Week: Friday.

Nathanael.

St. John i. 45—51.

Philip brings Nathanael to Jesus, Who greets him as "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile." Our Lord tells him that He saw him when Philip found him under the fig-tree; and Nathanael recognizes in Jesus, the Son of God, the King of Israel.

1. Philip is not satisfied with one convert. He seeks another man of good-will, to whom he communicates the joyful tidings that he has found the Messias. Philip was a worthy disciple of his Master. He could not refrain from speaking of Him, and inviting others to enrol themselves under His banner. It is a great mark of love to Jesus, if we are zealous in proclaiming His love to others.

2. Nathanael is incredulous at first; he will not believe that a great Prophet can come from a place of such indifferent repute as Nazareth, but at Philip's suggestion he consents to come and see. Hence learn: (1) Not to be too credulous, but to test and try any reported wonders. (2) Not to be prejudiced against others by reason of their origin. (3) To be willing to inquire into the claims of any who may possibly have a Divine mission to act with Divine authority.

3. Nathanael does not remain long incredulous in the presence of the Son of God. All men of good-will when brought face to face with Truth and with the Catholic Church are irresistibly drawn to it, and need but little evidence to convince them of its Divine character. This recognition of the supernatural is a gift that men possess in proportion to their obedince to the voice of conscience.

First Week: Saturday.

The Marriage at Cana.

St. John ii. 1—11.

At a marriage-feast at Cana, at which our Lord, His holy Mother, and His disciples were present, the wine runs short and our Lady calls the attention of Jesus to the want. At first He seems to rebuke her, but at her bidding He turns six jars of water into the choicest wine. She notices their perplexity and hastens to relieve it.

1. Observe our Lady's thoughtful charity, and her distress at the distress of the entertainers. Her sympathy is not only with what men consider great troubles. Every little inconvenience and annoyance that befalls the friends of Jesus Christ touches her immaculate heart. Learn hence to extend your sympathy to every form of trouble that others suffer.

2. Our Lord at first receives the request of His holy Mother with apparent refusal He pretends that He is not going to grant it. But He is only pretending. So, too, He sometimes pretends to be deaf to the prayers of His faithful servants. They ask, and ask apparently in vain. But it is only that He may be more generous in the end and may reward their perseverance with graces and gifts that they would not have earned had they been heard at first.

3. The wine that our Lord creates is so delicious and superior to what they had had before that the bridegroom is astonished. He need not have wondered. Christ keeps His best gifts to the last. At first trouble, suffering, anxiety; at last peace, joy, happiness, delight. All this, too, even here, to those who are very faithful to God's grace, and how much more in Heaven!

Second Week: Sunday.

The Expulsion of the Traders from the Temple.

St. John ii. 13—17.

Jesus finding in the Temple sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves, and money-changers trading, drives them out with a scourge of small cords, saying to them: "Make not the house of My Father a house of traffic."

1. The anger of the Son of God is roused by the indignity done to His Father's house by those who traded therein. God is always jealous of any encroachment of worldly things on what is consecrated to Him. Woe to those who turn to secular purposes things sacred! How careful we should be to perform all that we have promised to God and to pay Him all that we have offered to Him. Have I ever failed in this respect, or robbed God of what is His due or what I have devoted to be His?

2. There is one respect in which all have failed in giving to God His due. In our prayers, at Holy Mass, in time of meditation, we profess to give our thoughts to God. He therefore has a claim on an exclusive possession of them. Yet how often have I deliberately allowed worldly interests, pleasures, amusements, cares, to occupy His place, and to run riot in my heart even before the altar, so that I have made the house of God a den of thieves!

3. It seems strange that these traders should not have resisted Him Who drove them out. They knew He was right and they were wrong. Nothing is so cowardly as a guilty conscience. A man who knows that he is condemned by the law of God cannot withstand the rebuke of his fellow-men —how much less the Divine anger of the Son of God!

Second Week: Monday.

The Test of Jesus' Mission.

John ii. 18—25.

When the Jews asked Jesus what sign He gave to them that He was acting with God's authority, He answered: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews thought He meant the Temple of Jerusalem, but He referred to the temple of His Body.

1. There were doubtless some who asked in good faith why Christ took upon Himself the work of reforming the abuse which had crept into the Temple, but others who asked in a spirit of hatred and ill-will. See our Lord's wisdom. His answer is one which would set the former thinking, but only perplex the latter, and render their ill-will greater. This is always God's way. He proposes mysteries for the acceptance of all; men of good-will ponder on them and are drawn to God; men of ill-will reject the mystery and its Author.

2. Our Lord made the Resurrection the test and corner-stone of His Mission. So the Apostles preached Jesus and the Resurrection. So St. Paul says: "If Christ is not risen, our faith is vain." It is the test of a Christian: Do you believe that Jesus rose again? Thank God for your firm belief in this glorious mystery, and cry out, Lord, I believe!

3. Christ speaks of His Body as the temple of God consecrated to His service. So, too, our bodies are the temples of God. How sacred they ought to be in our eyes! How carefully we should guard them against any defilement of intemperance or impurity, even against a dangerous look, an immodest word, or an unbecoming gesture.

Second Week: Tuesday.

The Visit of Nicodemus.

St. John iii. 1, 2.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a leading man among the Jews, comes by night to declare to our Lord his belief in His Mission and to converse with Him.

1. The Pharisees were the most hopeless class among the Jews: bigoted, proud, selfish, hypocrites. Yet among the Pharisees there was at least one man of good-will who was drawn to our Lord by the words He spoke and the miracles He wrought. Hence learn never to condemn any one because he belongs to a class of evil men. In Sodom was the just Lot; among sinners of abandoned life, St. Mary Magdalen; among the Pharisees, Nicodemus.

2. Nicodemus was a man of loyal soul, but he was timid in his loyalty. He did not dare to face the obloquy which he would have incurred by a public visit to our Lord. Men in high position, and especially men in a false position like that of the Pharisees, are indeed to be pitied. They are often very slaves to the opinion of others and their own supposed reputation or interest. Thank God if you are in a humble position, able to follow your conscience unhindered.

3. Our Lord does not refuse Nicodemus because he was ashamed to come to Him by day, or reproach him with cowardice. He knows the difficulties of his position and makes all allowance for them. He accepts the least mark of good-will, the least approach of the soul to Him. How good He is to us! How considerate to our weakness! How ready to overlook our many slights and our unkindness! This it is that almost compels us to love Him.

Second Week: Wednesday.

The New Birth.

St. John iii. 3—8.

Our Lord declares to Nicodemus the necessity of being born again if we are to see the Kingdom of God, and explains the meaning of this new birth.

1. When Nicodemus declares his belief that Jesus is a teacher sent from God, our Lord answers by what seems beside the mark. He tells him that, "Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." His meaning is: "In order to appreciate with Divine faith Who I am, and what means My being sent from God, a man must be born again." It is only the soul that is raised to the supernatural order that can see the Kingdom of God, and recognize who it is that is its King.

2. In the answer of Nicodemus we see the carnal mind still strong within him. He takes a carnal view of the new birth: "How can a man be born when he is old?" So we find that the mysteries of the Kingdom of God are a riddle to all who are not taught of God. They assert that the prophecies of the Old Testament do not primarily refer to our Lord, and explain away even the miracles of the Gospel. The Blessed Eucharist seems to them absurd, and modern miracles a fiction. Thank God for the gift of faith.

3. Our Lord explains to Nicodemus that the spiritual new birth is effected by the secret grace of the Holy Spirit accepted by the soul. It comes noiselessly and like a gentle wind. It is given to all who ask it, and though they know not whence it comes, yet they recognize it as a voice from God. To this Voice, O Jesus, may I be ever obedient!

Second Week: Thursday.

The Heavenly Gift.

St. John iii. 9—13.

Nicodemus asks our Lord how these things of which He speaks are to be done. Jesus tells him that he, as a teacher in Israel, ought to understand them.

1. The surprise that our Lord expresses at Nicodemus' ignorance is meant to teach us that if we are in any position of authority, God expects of us a higher standard of knowledge and practice than He expects of others. There is scarcely any one who is not invested with some authority from God over children, servants, pupils, younger members of our little circle. Some of us have more important and responsible authority. Do we appreciate the account we shall have to give of the use we have made of our authority?

2. Jesus had explained to Nicodemus, by a metaphor from sensible things, the meaning of the new birth which the Spirit of God works in the soul. He had spoken with the Divine authority of one who had Himself seen and known that which He announced respecting the things of God. But Nicodemus had not yet the grace to understand, and so he understood not. In Divine things we can do nothing without grace. We may be able, learned, quick-sighted, intelligent, but without grace we are blind and deaf.

3. Our Lord further tells him that none can speak from direct personal knowledge of heavenly things save He Himself, the Son of Man, and though He had come down from Heaven, He was still present there, in full possession of the Beatific Vision. Happy those to whom Jesus teaches heavenly truths!

Second Week: Friday.

The Brazen Serpent.

St. John iii. 14—21.

Jesus further explains to Nicodemus how the Son of Man must be lifted up upon the Cross, so that all who gaze on Him with faith and love may be saved through Him. He tells how His Mission was to save, not to judge the world. None are condemned, save those who reject and refuse the light, because their deeds are evil.

1. As the brazen serpent was raised up in the desert, and all who gazed with faith upon it were healed of the bite of the poisonous serpents that had attacked them, so the Son of Man was to be exalted on the Cross, that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. O merciful Jesus, what a remedy Thou hast provided for the deadly effects of sin! One look of faith and love on Thee, one cry of mercy from the heart, and all is forgiven!

2. We sometimes are inclined to think of God the Father as our mighty King and stern Master, and of Jesus as praying for us with a gentleness which is in a sort of contrast to the severity of His Father. Not so. God the Father loves the world with the same love as God the Son. He yearns over fallen man with the same Divine yearning. He has the same tender affection for each one of us, the same desire to make us happy to all eternity.

3. Why is it that the Eternal Father does not have this desire fulfilled? Why did the Son shed for so many His Precious Blood in vain? It is because men refuse to listen, hate the light, cling to their own perverse ways. Alas! have not I often thus feared the light, lest I should be condemned by it?

Second Week: Saturday.

St. John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus.

St. John iii. 23—36.

Some of the disciples of St. John the Baptist, on hearing that Jesus is baptizing and drawing all men to Him, inform their master. St. John declares that the new Teacher is the Bridegroom, the Spouse of His Bride the Church; that it is his own greatest joy to witness the increase of His influence, for He is from Heaven, and the Son of God.

1. Observe how readily and gracefully St. John retires into the background. There is no selfishness and jealousy at seeing how another is preferred before him. On the contrary, to listen to the Voice of the Lamb of God is the fulfilment of all his hopes and his greatest joy. Here is the test of the true Apostle, of the real Saint. He is willing thus to be thrust out of sight and notice. How different from myself, who want to be highly esteemed and noticed!

2. St. John bears witness to the Son of God under a new character, that of the Bridegroom. Thus he declares, under God's inspiration, the fact of the mystical union of Christ and His Church: "He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom," and so testifies to the Divinity of Jesus. Jesus is the Spouse of each Christian soul. How pure therefore should my soul be if it is to be fit for His sacred presence.

3. St. John further declares that Jesus is from Heaven and teaches what He has Himself seen, and that His words are the words of God, and that all things are given into His hand. If this was true while He was clad in the form of a servant, how much more now that He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! In His hands then I am always safe.

Third Week: Sunday.

The Well of Samaria.

St. John iv. 1—9.

Our Lord, travelling from Judæa to Galilee, sits down at mid-day, weary and faint, by the well of Samaria. A woman of Samaria comes to draw water, and is astonished that He, a Jew, should ask for water of a Samaritan.

1. Behold the Son of God, thirsty and wayworn, resting during the noon-tide heat. He was wearied out with the journey He had undertaken in order to save man from sin and death. No wonder He is weary with seeking for those who, instead of flocking to Him at the sound of His voice, seem to avoid and shrink from Him. Yet He goes on following them so patiently, so gently calling them. How often have I wearied Him by my obstinacy and my neglect of His voice calling me. *Quærens me sedisti lassus.* Thou hast indeed toiled and laboured to bring me to Thee. O, may I listen and obey!

2. Our Lord begins by asking the woman to do Him a little service. This is often the best possible way of opening up friendly relations with strangers. It creates a kindly feeling on the part of the benefactor, be the benefit ever so small. If there is any one whom I am anxious to gain, I will try and pursue this plan. Men somehow are drawn towards those to whom they are kind.

3. The woman is astonished at the request. The Jews avoided the Samaritans as being apostates from Judaism, unclean, heretics. But where there is a soul to be saved, Jesus sets all else aside. His charity is an all-enduring charity. He came to save the lost, and in this outcast race He recognized many of His elect. Hence I will shun none, despise none.

Third Week: Monday.

The Living Water.

St. John iv. 10—15.

Jesus takes no notice of the woman's wonder, and promises that if she asks of Him, He will give her living water that will spring up to life everlasting, and will make it unnecessary for her to visit the well.

1. "If thou didst know the gift of God!" This was the unfulfilled condition which would be the means of obtaining that living water which satisfies all our needs. If only we recognized the unsearchable value of the gifts of God! If only we appreciated the priceless treasure of His love! If only we knew how eager He is to give us forgiveness, peace, joy, happiness in this life and in the life to come! If only we knew all this, how different our prayers would be, how frequent, how fervent, how persevering! O God, help me to appreciate better the value of Thy gifts.

2. What is the living water which Jesus promises to all who ask for it! It is the gift of the Holy Spirit, that He pours into the hearts of all those who love Him. This gift, like water, cleanses them from all their sins, it refreshes and strengthens them, it nourishes in their souls all the virtues which bud, and blossom, and flourish under the influence of the Holy Spirit indwelling in the soul. Give to me, O Lord, this living water!

3. This living water includes in itself all spiritual delights. It is that of which our Lord promises that He will give us to drink in Heaven freely, and in a measure so abundant as to satisfy all our desires, not drop by drop, as here on earth. It is this living water the sweetness of which this poor Samaritan could not understand, as none can who are still attached to earthly and sinful pleasures.

Third Week: Tuesday.

The True and False Worship.

St. John iv. 16—25.

Our Lord reveals to the Samaritan woman His knowledge of her past life, and in answer to her inquiries about the true God, tells her that it is in the Temple at Jerusalem that He dwells, but that the time was coming when He would be adored all over the world, by those who adore Him in spirit and in truth.

1. See how Jesus, with Divine tact, leads the woman to a confession of her sinful life. He does not blame her, but merely sets before her the sad facts; and grace does the rest. She is not repelled by the implied rebuke, but rather drawn to Him. So, when we tell others of their faults, we shall not repel, but rather attract them, if we speak with something of the charity of Jesus. It is because we are harsh and bitter that they will not listen.

2. The woman then asks Jesus whether it is on Mount Gerizim (as the Samaritans asserted) or in the Temple on Mount Sion, that God was to be worshipped. Jesus gently tells her that it is at Jerusalem that He is to be adored, and that the Samaritans worship an unknown deity. "You adore you know not what." So it is with modern heretics. They bow before their altars, but all is vague and uncertain; they adore they know not what.

3. At the same time, our Lord tells the woman that the time is coming when the worship of the true God will be spread over all the earth. He was thinking of the Catholic Church and its universal sway, and how He would be present, God as well as Man, on every altar, where true adorers would adore Him in spirit and in truth. Thank God that you are one of that happy company.

Third Week: Wednesday.

The Conversion of the Samaritans.

St. John iv. 26—42.

Our Lord declares to the woman that He is the Christ; and on the return of His disciples, who had been buying provisions, the woman leaves her water-pot and hastens to the city, and tells her fellow-townsmen that she has found the Messias. They invite our Lord to Samaria, and He remains there two days, and converts many.

1. The poor woman, conscious of Divine authority in the words of Jesus, remarks that at the coming of the Messias all such difficulties are to be solved, as if already half-convinced that it was to Him that she was speaking. Jesus, seeing her growing faith and her honest good-will, reveals to her that He is the Messias, the Deliverer of Israel. The woman listens and believes at once. Do I always show a like docility?

2. No sooner has she given in her allegiance to Jesus, than the disciples arrive with their provisions. She leaves her water-can unheeded, and hurries to the town with her message, that at the well of Jacob is One Who has read her heart, and Who must be the Christ. Admire (1) her eagerness to spread the knowledge of Jesus: (2) her neglect of all else in order to do so: (3) her recognition of His Divine character: (4) the persuasiveness of her earnest words.

3. The Samaritans come forth and invite Jesus to stay with them. O, happy those who issue such an invitation to the Lord of Life! They listen to Him, and He is their Saviour from heresy, and blindness, and sin. Do I recognize Him with similar appreciation when I kneel in His presence, or actually look upon Him, hidden under the sacramental veils?

Third Week: Thursday.

The Ripening Harvest.

St. John iv. 31—38.

During the absence of the Samaritan woman, our Lord tells His disciples that His meat is to do His Father's will, and reminds them of the boundless fields that are whitening for the harvest, ready to be reaped by those who should preach the Gospel of God.

1. Our Lord tells His Apostles, when they press Him to take some food, that He has meat to eat which they know not of. He explains that His food is to carry out, in blind obedience, the task that His Father had laid upon Him. One thing alone He asked Himself: "What is it that My Father wishes me to do?" This is the secret of all sanctity.

2. Jesus directs the attention of His Apostles to the field of work ready for the harvest. It may be that he pointed to the Samaritans, coming in a crowd to hear Him. It may be that He spoke of the great harvest of both Jews and Gentiles. Now, as then, there are fields waiting the reaper. What do I do to help in the harvest? by alms, by my own personal efforts, by training others to work for God?

3. "One man sows and another reaps." How often is this the case! Only in the Day of Judgment will each receive his due share in the work done. A priest receives converts, but he is only the reaper. The sower is some Religious praying in solitude, or some old woman telling her beads. One day sower and reaper will rejoice together. If I cannot reap, at least I can sow, and earn a share in the joy of bringing souls to God.

Third Week: Friday.

The Healing of the Nobleman's Son.

St. John iv. 46—54.

Our Lord, travelling from Samaria to Galilee, arrives at Cana, where a man of authority, belonging to Capharnaum, comes and begs Him to come down and heal his dying son. Jesus tells him to return home, for his son is alive and well. The man believes the word of Jesus, and on his return finds that the boy has recovered at the very moment that Jesus spoke. He and all his home became disciples of our Lord.

1. The ruler of Capharnaum had but a partial faith. He believes that Jesus can cure his son if He is present at his bedside, but it never occurs to him that He can do so equally well from a distance. Yet our Lord does not reject his petition on that account. He loves to fan into a flame even a spark of faith or love. My faith and love is indeed but a tiny spark. O Jesus, fan it into a flame with the breath of Thy grace!

2. Our Lord seems to say to those who listened to Him: "Are not My words enough! Is not the law of love that I publish sufficient to draw your hearts to believe what I speak? No! unless you see signs and wonders you believe not." O Jesus, this shall not be my spirit. No miracles do I need to make me put my trust in Thee, save the miracle of Thy Divine love.

3. The prayer of the ruler is heard, but not in the literal sense. Christ did not go down to his house, but by one word He wrought the cure. So, often He does not grant our prayers as we ask, but eventually He does far better for us. This we should remember when our petitions seem to pass unheeded.

Third Week: Saturday.

The Synagogue at Nazareth.

St. Luke iv. 16—22.

Jesus going into the synagogue at Nazareth on the Sabbath-day, takes the book and reads from the Prophet Isaias (lxi. 1, 2), a prophecy concerning Himself. He tells those present that on that day the prophecy is fulfilled. They wonder at His words, and say: "Is not this the Son of Joseph?"

1. It was the custom among the Jews to assemble every Sabbath-day in the synagogue to read the Law of Moses. Any one present was allowed to read the Law, and to speak on what he had read. Jesus avails Himself of the opportunity thus afforded Him to proclaim His Divine Mission, and reads the passage in Isaias which describes the work that the Messias was to accomplish. How eagerly He is listened to! Something thrills the hearts of those present. They know not that it is God who speaks to them, but they are conscious (1) of the marvellous attractiveness of the speaker; (2) of His Divine authority; (3) of His superiority to all their ordinary teachers. So it always is with those whom God sends. Not so men outside the Church; they may talk beautifully, but they do not touch the heart.

2. What is it Christ proclaims? That He is come (1) to preach the Gospel to the poor, rather than to the rich, (2) to heal the contrite, not the proud, (3) to set at liberty the captive, and those who are crushed with a sense of sin. Ponder on these conditions, and apply them to yourself.

3. Christ declares this Scripture to be fulfilled in Himself. It must have seemed to his hearers a strange boldness in the Son of Joseph the carpenter. Yet He held them spell-bound. They could not resist His gracious words. Can I resist them now?

Fourth Week: Sunday.

A Prophet in His own Country.

St. Luke iv. 23, 24.

Our Lord explains to the people of Nazareth that He is to be rejected in His own country; that He will not perform among them the same signs as elsewhere; and illustrates His intention by the example of Elias and Eliseus, who passed by their own countrymen to carry their message of mercy to strangers.

1. Our Lord tells the Nazarenes that they will expect Him to perform His miracles among them on the principle: "Physician, heal thyself." They forgot that the true relationship to Christ is founded on supernatural charity, not in natural kinship. If I want Him to heal me, I must do His will, for thus I am worthy to be classed as His true mother or sister or brother in the spiritual order.

2. The answer Jesus makes to the thoughts or words of the Nazarenes is the further proverb: "No prophet is accepted in his own country." Why is this? Sometimes it is that the prophet is found out in his home to be but a somewhat ordinary mortal; sometimes (as in our Lord's case) that those who are in continual contact with some teacher of extraordinary holiness, if they are not attracted to him, have their hearts hardened. Sometimes Catholics, religious, even priests, are only hardened by their familiarity with holy things. Alas, that it should be so!

3. Elias in the time of famine was sent to bring plenty to a Gentile; Eliseus healed none of the lepers of Israel, but only a foreign soldier. We must not presume on our being born Catholics, as the Jews did on their belonging to the people of God. God may reject us and bestow His fondest love and best graces on those born and reared outside the Church.

Fourth Week: Monday.

The Anger of the Nazarenes.

St. Luke iv. 25—30.

The Nazarenes, on hearing the words of Jesus, and understanding that He intimated to them that as Elias and Eliseus treated the Jews, so He would treat them, were filled with fury; and seizing Jesus, dragged Him to the edge of a precipice to cast Him down. But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.

1. What was it that filled the Nazarenes with such fury on hearing the words of Jesus? It was that He gave them to understand that His mercy was not to be bestowed on them or on the Jewish nation. Strangers whom they detested and despised were to be the chief objects of His love. The Son of the carpenter actually declined to make His own city the scene of these wonderful gifts of which He spoke. "Who was this insolent upstart? Were they to suffer His insolence?" Vehement indignation is always a thing to be suspected in fallible man. It is generally a cloak for wounded self-love.

2. These Nazarenes were moved by their pride and hatred of the truth to a crime the guilt of which can scarcely be overstated. They had no excuse. Jesus had dwelt among them for thirty years. They had seen His gentleness, modesty, charity, sweetness. They had heard His words of grace. Yet they rejected and hated Him, and were at heart His murderers. All through pride! He had slighted their dignity. What a lesson for us!

3. Jesus' hour was not yet come, and the maddened crowd of His enemies suddenly missed Him. He had vanished, none knew how. God will protect His own until their work is done. No one really dies before his time.

Fourth Week: Tuesday.

The Call of the Fishermen.

St. Matt. iv. 18—22.

Jesus, leaving Nazareth, goes to dwell at Capharnaum. Walking by the Sea of Galilee, He sees Peter and Andrew fishing, and calls them to come after Him. They immediately leave their nets and follow Him. He afterwards calls John and James, the sons of Zebedee, who obey with similar alacrity.

1. This was not the first time that Jesus had drawn to Himself St. Andrew and St. Peter. (St. John i. 41.) But He had not definitely called them to join Him. He works for the most part gradually in the hearts of men. He sows the seed of His grace, and then He leaves it for a time to mature, and afterwards a second summons leads to willing sacrifice for Him. So He has dealt with me. He has led me on gently, and sought to bring me by degrees nearer to Himself. Have I the good-will of these disciples?

2. Jesus calls these fishermen to be fishers of men, to cast the Gospel net which hauls those who are enclosed in its sacred toils into the rich preserves and the unfathomed waters of the love of God. O what a privilege to be a fisher for God, and to share with Jesus the glorious task of filling the living waters with those who shall bask and shine in them to all eternity.

3. After Peter and Andrew, James and John are called. They are mending their nets with their father Zebedee, when Christ calls them; nets, fishing, father, all count for nought. He calls, and then occupations, possessions, relations, all must be abandoned for His sake. What have I given up for Him?

Fourth Week: Wednesday.

The Synagogue at Capharnaum.

St. Mark i. 21—24.

At Capharnaum, as at Nazareth, Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath-day to listen to the reading of the Law. There happened to be present a possessed person who cried out in terror, and declared Jesus to be the Holy One of God.

1. In the present day, men laugh at the idea of possession, but Holy Scripture teaches its undoubted reality. The spirit of uncleanness is sometimes allowed to inhabit the human body, to control the actions, and speak through the mouths of men, often as the just punishment of long indulgence in sin. Pray God that the devil may never obtain any power or influence over you, as he does in greater or less degree over all who do not resist his evil suggestions.

2. The unclean spirit could not remain silent in the presence of the Son of God. It regarded Him with terror and dismay as its deadliest enemy, and at the same time its Lord. "What have we to do with Thee? Art Thou come to destroy us?" So evil ever shrinks before good. The followers of Jesus are powerful over evil spirits just in proportion as they share His holiness. If we were more like Him, the devil would fear us more, and evil would shrink away abashed in our presence.

3. The devils knew well the holiness of Jesus. They have a natural power to discern the true character of the hearts of men. They cannot read all our inmost thoughts, but they can form a very correct estimate of us; we cannot deceive them as we can deceive men. What a contempt they must have for me! How low must be their opinion of my virtue!

Fourth Week: Thursday.

The Casting Out of the Devil.

St. Matt. i. 25—28.

Our Lord imposes silence on the unclean spirit, and orders it to quit its victim. The devil throws the possessed on the ground in an agony of pain, and then leaves him unharmed. The spectators in awe and amazement ask themselves who this can be who has authority even over the powers of darkness.

1. One word from Jesus, and the unclean spirit is rebuked and holds its peace. How is it, then, that in spite of our appeals to Him, the evil spirits refuse to cease their whispers of temptation, their foul suggestions? It may be because we give them some excuse by our carelessness in not avoiding occasions of sin. It may be that our Lord desires to humble us, and make us feel our weakness and our need of Him. Anyhow, He will give us the graces necessary to resist our foe; and the fiercer the temptation the greater will be our final reward. Courage, then, courage!

2. The devil, when about to go out, tears his victim and throws him on the ground. He will not go out without a struggle. In temptations, the very fact that the repugnance is strongest and the suffering most acute, is often the clearest proof that the devil is about to depart. It is the impotent malice of one who knows that his time is short.

3. When the struggle is over and the devil expelled, the prisoner, freed from his persecution, has suffered no harm. So temptation, however horrible, if resisted, leaves no stain upon the soul; the enemy has harassed and persecuted us, but we have gained strength, not lost it by the conflict. O Christ, may I always bravely resist, and through Thy word escape unscathed.

Fourth Week: Friday.

The Healing of Peter's Wife's Mother.

St. Matt. i. 30—33.

On leaving the synagogue, our Lord and His disciples go to the house of Simon Peter, whose wife's mother is lying sick of a great fever. They tell Jesus of it, and He takes her by the hand, and at once the fever leaves her, and she ministers to them.

1. The disciples of our Lord tell Him of the woman who is lying dangerously ill in Simon's house. This is the occasion of her being healed. Our Lord knew of it before, but would He have worked the miracle had they not carried the case to Him? So Jesus waits now for us to tell Him of our needs, and of the needs of those we love. He likes to hear our troubles from our own lips in prayer, and often makes it a condition of delivering us from them.

2. This sick woman had a sort of claim on our Lord on account of her relationship to St. Peter. Jesus would not allow that the Nazarenes had any right to have these miracles wrought amongst them in consequence of His having lived at Nazareth, but this was because they had forfeited their privileges by their incredulity. But He recognizes natural ties, and He listens to the prayers of His disciples and friends, and especially of those who have given up all for Him, when they ask on behalf of those who are bound to them by any sort of connection or relationship.

3. One touch of Jesus' hand, and the fever and sickness leave the body of the invalid. It was the practical carrying out of the conviction of another sufferer: "Lord, if I may but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be whole." O Jesus, lay Thy healing hand on me!

Fourth Week: Saturday.

The Work of Jesus at Capharnaum.

St. Mark i. 34—38.

Jesus performed at Capharnaum many miracles, healing the sick and casting out devils, whom He suffered not to speak because they knew Him. In the evening He worked His work of mercy, and very early in the morning He went out into the desert to pray. There His disciples find Him, and when they urge Him to return, He tells them that He is sent to preach in other towns and cities as well.

1. Two kinds of miracles are here recorded of our Lord, the healing of bodily diseases and the casting out of devils. The latter is a far harder task than the former. How reluctant the devil is to quit his victims! Habit almost become second nature. What a firm hold he seems to have on them! So now that the conversion of sinners is a more wonderful exercise of Divine power than the healing of countless diseases.

2. Our Lord would not suffer the devils to proclaim His Divinity. He would not accept the declaration of the truth from such a source as this. So He does not bless the teaching of the truth by wicked men. Their power to influence others seems blighted. The first requisite is not eloquence or learning, but faithfulness to God and the love of Him.

3. In spite of His exhausting labours, Jesus goes into the desert to pray. This was for our sakes: He Himself needed no prayers. But He desired to teach us that when we do a great work for God, or meet with any sort of success, we should before all else go and thank Him, and attribute all to His Divine Providence.

Fifth Week: Sunday.

The Beatitudes: 1. Blessed are the Poor in Spirit.

St. Matt. v. 1—3.

Our Blessed Lord, going up into a mountain, gathers His disciples round Him, and explains to them the Gospel law that He had come to teach to man. He begins with the eight Beatitudes.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

1. All men desire happiness. We cannot help seeking to attain to it. It is the end and object of our lives. Our Lord's aim in coming down on earth was to teach us how to be happy or blessed. It is of no use seeking to be happy by any other method than by that which Jesus prescribes. O my Lord, teach me this lesson! I desire happiness, and I desire also to learn from Thee the means of attaining it.

2. First and foremost, Jesus places poverty of spirit as necessary to happiness. The world says, "Get rich, and you will be happy," and those who take the advice find that riches do not bring happiness. Jesus says, "Be poor of your own free-will, and you will be happy." The poverty of spirit that He recommends is a detachment from and readiness to resign all we possess for His sake.

3. What does He mean by poverty of spirit? (1) The willing renunciation of such riches as cannot be had without sin. (2) The dependence on God in the use of riches, and the readiness to resign them if we know that He asks it of us. (3) And best of all, the actual renunciation of all possessions, both in will and deed, that we may follow Christ in His sacred poverty. To all such our Lord promises a treasure in Heaven—nay, He says that the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. What degree have I of this poverty of spirit?

Fifth Week: Monday.

The Beatitudes: 2. Blessed are the Meek.

St. Matt. v. 4.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land."

1. Meekness is the outward expression of humility. It is the primary characteristic which our Lord bids us imitate in Himself. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." It is not only the fruit of humility, but the nurse of humility. We continually fail in humility without being conscious of it, but we cannot well fail in meekness without knowing it. We see the effect on others—we hear our own angry words. If, therefore, I wish to be humble, I must cultivate meekness.

2. How beautiful, too, is meekness in itself! Meekness turns away anger; silences the evil speaker; makes men ashamed of their own cruel words; makes us to be conformed to the image of the Lamb of God. Moses was dear to God because he was of men the meekest. "Remember David and all his meekness," says the Psalmist. Our Lord Himself before His enemies was an example of perfect meekness. Alas! how deficient I am in this virtue! Perhaps I even call the meek poor-spirited, and pride myself on my power of self-defence, and my mischievous pugnacity.

3. "The meek possess the land." How true this is even on earth. Men yield to the meek where they would not yield to those who opposed them. The meek are liked and are listened to, and somehow in the end remain masters of the situation. How much more will they be the happy possessors of the heavenly country, the land of God's elect!

Fifth Week: Tuesday.

The Beatitudes: 3. Blessed are they that mourn.

St. Matt. v. 5.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

1. Why is it a blessed thing to mourn? Even in the natural order sorrow chastens and purifies the character. It thus paves the way for supernatural graces. Sorrow, too, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, detaches our hearts from the world, makes us feel our dependence upon God, turns our hearts to Him, makes us long for Heaven. Do not then lament if sorrow overtakes you, but rather rejoice, for "Blessed are they that mourn."

2. Blessed again are they that mourn over their sins. It is the best penance that we can do. But we cannot really mourn over sin unless we have that aversion from it in which purity of heart consists. Blessed too are they that mourn over the sins of others, and are grieved at heart by reason of the manifold offences committed against the Divine Goodness, and of the loss of so many souls dear to the Heart of Jesus. Let us pray for a more heart-felt sorrow for sin. How lightly at present we esteem it!

3. Those who mourn with supernatural sorrow shall surely be comforted. Their consolation is not far away. It will soon pour sweetness into their heart; nay, their very sorrow has in it already an element of sweetness which tells of the joy in prospect and of Heaven to come at last, where in one moment we shall be consoled and compensated for all the mourning of this valley of tears.

Fifth Week: Wednesday.

The Beatitudes: 4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Justice.

St. Matt. v. 6.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill."

1. What is it to hunger and thirst after justice? In the case of the sinner, it consists in a longing desire to be freed from his sin, and this is a happy sign of a coming change. So the Prodigal longed after his father's home. So St. Augustine longed to escape from the chain of sin. So the sinner who comes to the tribunal of Penance longs after the blessedness of having the burden of his sins removed. All these are blessed in prospect, not in virtue of their present condition.

2. There is a higher form of this hunger and thirst after justice which is to be found in the Saints in proportion to their sanctity. They are happy, wonderfully happy, happy amid all the trials and sufferings of this valley of tears, but this happiness is the result of their hunger and thirst after the heavenly country. It is the prospect of coming joy that makes them so light-hearted. Is this my case? When I repeat the words, "O Paradise! I would that I were there!" do I mean them, or are they mere empty and unreal sentiment?

3. Those who hunger and thirst after justice shall have their fill. Even in this life the Saints cried out, *Satis, Domine*—"Enough, O Lord," when God poured into their souls spiritual delights. In Heaven all will overflow with joy. The joy that God gives satisfies, but never satiates. We always have enough, yet we never have enough. This is the secret of its sufficiency to all eternity.

Fifth Week: Thursday.

The Beatitudes: 5. Blessed are the Merciful.

St. Matt. v. 7.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

1. Mercy is the virtue of charity as applied to those who are in distress or trouble. It is the reflection of the love of God for perishing sinners. It is that quality the exercise of which towards ourselves is our greatest need. Without the mercy of God we are lost. Without His mercy we can never free ourselves from sin. Without His mercy we can never hope to see His Face in Heaven. The note of our every prayer should be, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" It is only thus we can hope to be forgiven.

2. To obtain mercy, then, must be the aim of our life. How are we to do so? Christ, the King of Mercy, teaches us the way. We must show mercy to others if we are to find mercy ourselves. It will be in vain for us to cry for mercy, if, when others cried to us in their distress, we turned a deaf ear. Am I thus merciful to others, not from a natural motive, but because I wish to follow in the steps of the merciful and loving Saviour? Or am I severe and hard to my fellow-sinners?

3. What are the methods by which we may show mercy? (1) By mercy to the poor. Daniel tells Nabuchodonosor, "Redeem thy sins by alms-deeds, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." (2) By tenderness and gentleness to the sick and those in trouble. (3) By forgiving those who have wronged me, as I hope to be forgiven. Are these my characteristics?

Fifth Week: Friday.

The Beatitudes: 6. Blessed are the Clean of Heart.

St. Matt. v. 8.

"Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

1. The vision of God is the end of man's existence and the utmost perfection of his happiness. To be shut out from seeing Him to all eternity involves not only the blackness of darkness, but the lowest depth of despair and misery. The enjoyment of all possible earthly pleasures for a million of years would not compensate for the loss of that vision, if only for a moment. The endurance of all possible miseries would be a small price to pay for one instant of the entrancing joy it brings with it. Hence I must frame my life so as to secure this vision of God at any cost.

2. To do this I must fulfil the condition our Lord here lays down. I must be clean of heart. I must never allow my affections to fix themselves on any creature of earth, when I know that in so doing I am acting in opposition to the will of God. I must not indulge any pleasure or passion, however attractive or intense, if I know that God forbids it, else I shall be in danger of forfeiting the vision of God to all eternity.

3. Shall I lose any solid happiness or pleasure by this self-denial? On the contrary, I shall be the gainer even here. I shall earn peace of mind, health of soul and body, cheerfulness, a good conscience; and on earth already I shall begin to taste the happiness of seeing God in such way as is possible during our mortal life. My faith in God and my love of Him will make me despise and hate those gross pleasures which are the husks of swine.

Fifth Week: Saturday.

The Beatitudes: 7. Blessed are the Peacemakers.

St. Matt. v. 9.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

1. The Gospel of Christ involves a strange mixture of peace and war. We have to fight against our spiritual enemies, against our evil passions, against pride and self-will. We are sometimes brought into antagonism with friends or relations for Christ's sake. Yet at the same time Christ is the Prince of Peace, and when we fight against evil, we must always be at peace as far as regards our own dispositions, even with those whose conduct we oppose and condemn.

2. More than this: we must not be content with being ourselves at peace with those around us. We should do all we possibly can to encourage and promote a kindly feeling in the community in which we live. This is within the reach of all, and blessed are those who are thus known as centres of peace. Blessed is the house in which they dwell, for their example is contagious. Am I in this sense a peacemaker?

3. The reward of this peacemaking temper is a recognition of our being children of God, and like to our elder Brother, the Prince of Peace. How beautiful is the footfall of those who thus carry out in their deeds the Gospel of peace. They are dear to the little circle in which their lot is cast. God calls them His beloved children. They are welcome everywhere, and above all will be welcome among the Angels in Heaven.

Sixth Week: Sunday.

The Beatitudes: 8. Blessed are they that suffer Persecution for Justice' sake.

St. Matt. v. 10.

"Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

1. To suffer persecution for justice' sake is the common lot of all who follow Christ. It is one of the marks of predestination. As soon as a sinner turns to God, at once some form of persecution or other commences; some kind of suffering is inflicted by those around; sometimes parents disown their child, or a husband changes his former kindness to bitter unkindness; or for justice' sake money, position, worldly influence is forfeited. Blessed are those who here have to endure this persecution for justice' sake.

2. Sometimes God allows His friends to be persecuted and misunderstood, not so much by evil men, or worldly relations, or lax Christians, as by those who are holy and devoted to Him. It has been said that the most cruel form of persecution is that which is inflicted by a holy man, or a Religious Superior. The authority of the persecutor makes the blows he inflicts fall far more heavily; his virtue makes the pain he inflicts far sharper. It is for this reason a very great privilege, only we must be careful that it is for justice' sake, and not because of our pride or obstinacy or carelessness, or other defects, that we are persecuted.

3. What is the reward of being persecuted for justice' sake? None else than the Kingdom of Heaven. The persecuted then will triumph, and their place will be exalted in proportion as they have been thrust low on earth, put out of sight, and cruelly used for conscience' sake. They not only will be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Kingdom of Heaven will be theirs.

Sixth Week: Monday.

Christians the Salt and the Light of the World.

St. Matt. v. 13—16.

Our Lord tells His disciples that they are the salt of the world, since by their teaching and example they are to preserve the world from corruption. They are moreover the light of the world, and must let their light shine before men, with the motive of thereby promoting the glory of God.

1. As salt without savour is fit only for the dung-hill, so Christians who give bad example are not only useless, but fit only to be cast out and trodden under the feet of men and beasts. This is what has often happened when Catholics have lost their faith and fervour. They have been trodden down by the foot of the persecutor. Pray that you may always spread a savour of good works around.

2. The disciples are, moreover, the light of the world, and from the fact of being Christians, draw the eyes of men upon them. They must not hide their light under a bushel, since God requires of them that they should forward His cause in the world, and promote the love of Him by the brightness of their good example. Ask yourselves if you are in any sense a source of light and happiness to those around you.

3. The Christians are warned by our Lord that in letting their light shine before men, their aim must be to gain glory not for themselves, but for Him. This is the real test of the value of our work. For whom do we do it? If for ourselves, then there is laid up for us not a reward, but the anger of God; if for God, then it will be a source of glory to Him, of good to others, of everlasting joy to ourselves.

Sixth Week: Tuesday.

The Fulfilling of the Law.

St. Matt. v. 21—48.

Jesus came not to abolish the Jewish law, but to carry it on to perfection. Hence He adds to the external mandates of the Jewish covenant a discipline of the heart. It is not sufficient to abstain from revenge and from adultery: the Christian law enforces charity and purity of word and thought as well as of act.

1. The law of Christ includes all the precepts of the Jewish law. Those commandments respecting purity of intention and the absence of thoughts of evil which the Pharisees slighted, our Lord declares to be so important, that whoever shall break one of them deliberately, or teach others to do the same, shall in the Kingdom of Heaven be held of no account, and be thrust out from the presence of God. Are there any precepts of the law of Christ that I think little of or recklessly violate?

2. In old time it was the act of violence that was forbidden. But our Lord says that any one who shall give way to anger or to a desire for revenge in his heart, or say contumelious words to others, shall be liable to the judgments of God. Is not this warning suitable to me, who so often yield to unkind, resentful thoughts, and a desire to take vengeance on those who have offended me?

3. In old time the act of unchastity was forbidden. But Christ reminds His disciples that a deliberate desire is a serious sin against chastity in the sight of God. Am I as careful as I ought to be to avoid all unchaste thoughts and all occasions that are likely to give rise to them?

Sixth Week: Wednesday.

On Alms and Prayers in Public.

St. Matt. vi. 1—13.

Our Lord warns His disciples against giving alms from a motive of ostentation, and against making long prayers in public with the object of being seen and admired by men.

1. If a man gives alms he always receives a reward. If he does it in order to gain human praise, he has the reward he seeks, but from God he receives no reward, but only a punishment for his pride and his desire to gain honour from men. How careful then I must be that when I give alms, it is not done to gain gratitude, or with a desire to be thought highly of, or from mere natural generosity, since thus I gain no reward from God, but, it may be, only call down His anger on me.

2. When we pray in public, or go to Mass when there is no obligation, the thought sometimes comes into our minds that others must be edified by our piety and must admire our devotion. We cannot prevent the thought presenting itself, there is no sin in that, but we must repel it to the best of our ability by dwelling on our own misery, and what we are in God's sight. Such a thought, if indulged deliberately, mars even the most pious prayer, and sometimes takes away all its merit before God, and is an offence, not an honour to Him.

3. Ought we to abstain from prayer, from Holy Communion, from any practice of devotion, because thoughts of vanity come in? Certainly not. Our rule should be to act in the presence of others just as if they were not there. If the temptation to vanity comes, say to the devil with St. Bernard: "I did not begin for you, and I will not leave off for you!"

Sixth Week : Thursday.

On the Laying up of Treasure.

St. Matt. vi. 19—21.

Jesus Christ exhorts His disciples to lay up for themselves treasure in Heaven, not on earth, that their hearts may be where their treasure is.

1. Every one desires to have some treasure to fall back upon in time of need, some resource in the uncertain future. We look forward, and feel the want of something on which to rely for declining years. Our Lord bids His disciples lay up such a treasure, not on earth, where it is perishable and insecure, but in Heaven, for a treasure in Heaven will avail us even on earth. God will not allow those to want who have committed their treasure to Him, and it will earn for us a rich harvest of joy and happiness to all eternity.

2. Men have a love of gathering together riches. They enjoy the activity of it. There is a fascination in it, and the more they have the more they desire. Jesus Christ tells His disciples that they must employ their activity in collecting treasures for Heaven, not for earth. Every act of charity, every prayer, every good thought, every battle against temptation, adds to this eternal treasure. Men who live for God will be astonished in seeing the abundance of the riches they have acquired during life, the inexhaustible wealth they will inherit in Heaven.

3. Our Lord gives another reason for laying up treasure in Heaven. We fix our hearts on what we value most ; as our treasure grows, our love for it grows. If we desire to love the things of Heaven, we must lay up our treasure there. O death, how terrible thou art to the man who has peace in his earthly goods ! and we may add, How sweet to him who has a rich treasure in Heaven !

Sixth Week: Friday.

On Purity of Intention.

St. Matt. vi. 22, 23.

The light of the body is the eye; the light of the soul is the intention with which we act. If that light be darkness, how great shall that darkness be!

1. The eye it is which directs the movements of the body and determines its aim. So it is the intention with which our actions are done that determines their character and their aim. Two men perform an action externally the same; give an alms, or pay a visit to a friend. One does it for self, the other for God. The act of the former is worthless, or sinful, in God's sight; that of the latter blots out sin, earns grace, and lays up treasure to all eternity.

2. How important then to direct all our intentions to God! We can merit in His sight by all we do. Actions in themselves indifferent—eating, drinking, sleeping, &c.,—all are lighted up with a supernatural light when done for God; and as the whole body is full of light if the eye be single, so our whole life becomes bright before God, if we offer our actions up to Him, and do them for His sake.

3. If our intention be an evil one, our whole life becomes dark in His sight. Actions in themselves most holy become displeasing to God if done from a motive of ostentation, or ill-will, or self-love. O how terrible is the darkness of a soul which is thus actuated by evil motives in things which in themselves seem to be done for God! O my God, save me from this darkness, and grant me the happiness of doing all for Thee!

Sixth Week: Saturday.

On Confidence in God.

St. Matt. vi. 25—34.

The disciples of Jesus are warned by Him against being solicitous about food and raiment, and are invited to trust Him to provide for them. He provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, and He will not let those want who make Him and His justice the end and object of their lives.

1. We are all sometimes harassed by worldly cares. We are in difficulties, and do not see our way out of them. Our means of support are failing us. Those around us do not treat us as they formerly did. We are hindered in our work by unforeseen obstacles, and we are tempted to be discouraged. Such hours it is that test our faith. We may not be able to see our way, and the light may be hidden among the clouds. But at least we can cry out: "O my God, I trust Thee still, I will trust Thee ever. To Thee I commit all my cares, troubles, needs. Forsake me not, O God of my salvation."

2. If God always provides for His children, how is it that we see them miserable, down-hearted, resourceless, discontented? It is because they do not trust Him. It is because they turn their back on Him, and fly to other means of help. They forsake Him, and then complain that He has forsaken them. Have I not sometimes acted thus?

3. There is another reason why we are often thus troubled and disheartened. It is that we do not seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice; we do not regulate our lives as we know God desires, but adopt plans of our own that are not in accordance with what He asks of us. If I desire God to provide for me, I must fulfil this necessary condition.

Seventh Week: Sunday.

On Rash Judgment.

St. Matt. vii. 1—5.

We must not judge others harshly, unless we desire to be similarly judged ourselves. We must not reprehend in others their small defects while we make no effort to correct our own serious faults.

1. The tendency to judge others harshly is one of the strongest of our defects. Conscious of our our own short-comings, it would seem as if we should naturally be lenient towards those of others. So far from this being so, we are generally most severe on those defects in others which we ourselves possess. If I am inclined to judge any fault in another severely, it is a sign that in some shape or other the same short-coming exists in me.

2. It is an alarming thought that we shall be judged with the same judgment that we pass on others. If we take a lenient and favourable view of them, God will take a lenient and favourable view of us. If we are severe in our interpretation of their acts, God will in like manner be severe on us. What chance would there be for me if I were to be judged with severity? Shall I not need the most lenient interpretation, and every possible excuse for my countless faults? I will, if only for my own sake, be most lenient to others, and excuse them.

3. There is also a tendency in some natures to play the part of amateur reformers. No one thanks such volunteer and self-appointed critics. They always give offence. They never do any real good. There is one person whom I must reform—myself. I shall not trouble about the trifling mote in my brother's eye, if I pay due attention to the beam in my own.

Seventh Week: Monday.

On the Efficacy of Prayer.

St. Matt. vii. 7—11.

'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you."

1. The necessity of asking for what we desire to obtain from God is repeatedly urged upon us by our Lord. He knew how the thought would present itself that God knows just what we need far better than we do, and that therefore asking is unnecessary, and so He opposes to this excuse for neglecting prayer, precepts the most urgent and His own example. God is not wont to give good things without prayer. Least of all will He give us any graces unless we ask, and ask earnestly and perseveringly. Is my asking such as is likely to move the Heart of God?

2. In order to enforce this still more, He promises that all who ask shall receive. He reminds us that the father gives good things to His children who ask for them, and that God, whose love for us is immeasurably greater than that of the fondest father for his darling child, cannot refuse good things to us. Dwell on this desire of Almighty God to give to His children all good things that they need, and learn from it great confidence and hopefulness about the future.

3. We must not expect to be heard on our first asking, nor to be heard at all if perchance we are asking for what God sees would be injurious to us. God is trying our patience and resignation to His holy will. But even if we have to wait long, we shall always obtain in the end the fulfilment of every petition which really tends to our true welfare.

Seventh Week: Tuesday.

On Judging by Results.

St. Matt. vii. 16—23.

"By their fruits ye shall know them."

1. It is sometimes said, that we must never judge of the wisdom or rectitude of any course of action by its results, and this is true if we look to immediate results. But the results of any action, or course of action, in the long run is invariably good, if the course of action is good. It must of necessity bring glory to God, and a reward to him who does it. Not at first, but after a time, long or short, its true character will appear in its consequences. Our actions have thus an eternal influence for good and evil.

2. Those who have others under their control always contribute a large share to the after-lives of those whom they have to rule. We find that a holy man sends forth other saints from his school, that the pious mother has children rich in grace. The influence is unconscious, but none the less real. Oh, how happy will those be in Heaven who have thus moulded others to virtue!

3. Jesus tells us that though we must not judge the actions of others, we can nevertheless tell the servants of Christ from the servants of the world or the devil by the work they do as a body. How clearly we see this in the Church as opposed to the sects. In spite of the faults and sins of Catholics, and the great excellencies of many individual Protestants, what a contrast in results! On the one hand an unbroken tradition of sanctity, on the other an irresistible downward tendency.

Seventh Week: Wednesday.

The House upon the Rock.

St. Matt. vii. 24, 25.

He who listens to the Divine precepts and obeys them, he alone shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: he alone has a house upon the rock that no winds or storms can shatter or destroy.

1. Our Lord dwells continually on a criterion of virtue which alone can stand in the Day of Judgment. None will be admitted into Heaven save those whose aim in life has been to do God's will, not their own. They may have been given to much prayer, to alms, to penances. They may have been kind, honourable, generous. They may have preached, prophesied, brought others to God, and even performed miracles; yet if they have followed their own will, not God's, all this will avail them nothing.

2. Only those who thus do the will of God will be able to stand against the storms of persecution, the floods of misery, the whirlwind of temptation. Their natural virtue will succumb, and like a house on the sand, will fall to pieces in the evil day. Nothing will endure save that which is founded on the solid rock of Divine love.

3. But for those who lay as the foundation Christ and Christ alone, who believe in Him, trust Him, love Him, the storms may rage, but not a hair of their head will perish. In every danger those who act under obedience for Christ's sake are in perfect security; nay, every storm and flood and wave only unites them more firmly to the rock on which they rest, Christ Jesus their Lord.

Seventh Week: Thursday.

The Miraculous Draught of Fishes.

St. Luke v. 1—11.

When the crowd pressed around our Lord, He put out to a short distance from the shore in Simon Peter's boat, and thence taught the people. After His sermon He orders the disciples, who had been toiling all night and had caught nothing, to let down their nets. They obey, and enclose a great multitude of fishes.

1. In the absence of Jesus the disciples had laboured, but all in vain. They had thrown their nets, but with no result whatever. So it is with all work in which Jesus is not present. Without Him every work, however pious, is but wasted, and only ends in disappointment.

2. But what a change when Jesus says the word! What is it has changed the fruitless toil into a labour which brings in a rich reward? Three causes—

(1) The net is now cast under obedience. Work done under obedience is always a success. It cannot be otherwise.

(2) Between the fruitless and the successful labour has intervened an act of charity done to Jesus for Jesus' sake. Charity brings a blessing on every work.

(3) The fishermen have meanwhile listened to the sacred words of Jesus, and drunk in something of His Spirit. This sanctifies all work, even the most secular.

3. What was the effect on St. Peter of success? It did not puff him up, but simply humbled him, because he saw it was not his work, but Christ's. This must be my spirit in success, and it will be if I attribute all success to God.

Seventh Week: Friday.

The Healing of the Leper.

St. Matt. viii. 2—4.

A leper comes and adores Christ, saying: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean." Our Lord touches him, and says: "I will, be thou made clean." And immediately his leprosy is cleansed. Jesus orders him to go and show himself to the priest, and offer the gift commanded by the Law.

1. Leprosy renders the leper an object hideous to behold. It covers his body with loathsome sores, eating away the flesh till the bones appear. It is a fit emblem of sin, which makes us hideous before God. Who is there that is not rendered offensive in His sight by this foul disfigurement? O my God, the foulest leprosy is beautiful compared with my sins.

2. The leper's is a model prayer. Confidence, "Thou canst make me clean," and a strong hope that Jesus intends to cleanse him. We may with advantage make his words our own as we kneel before the Blessed Sacrament. O Jesus my Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean even from sins such as mine; from inveterate habits which nothing but Thy grace can cure.

3. Our Lord with one word cleanses him. So when we make a good act of contrition the guilt of our sin is gone for ever. But though cleansed, the leper still has to show himself to the priest. So the sinner, though his sin may be already forgiven by a good act of contrition, has still to submit himself to the priest in the tribunal of Penance.

Seventh Week: Saturday.

The Healing of the Paralytic.

St. Mark ii. 1—12.

While Jesus was teaching in a house in Capharnaum, four men bring a paralytic, and carrying him to the top of the house, let him down into the midst where Jesus was. He, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." To the Scribes who objected to His forgiving sins, He answered by sending away the palsied man perfectly cured.

1. Paralysis represents a different side from leprosy of the nature of sin: the state of utter helplessness to which it reduces the sinner. He can do no work pleasing to God; cannot merit grace or forgiveness; cannot stir a step to be freed from his misery by his own strength or efforts. He is, as it were, dead to all that is good. This is not only the case with mortal sin; even venial sin paralyzes in some degree all that is good in us. Sometimes one little fault, deliberately indulged, seems to take away all our love and all our energy.

2. Observe the trouble the bearers took to bring the paralytic to Jesus. This pleased our Lord; He saw their faith. He likes people who are willing to take trouble. Works of charity which cost us something bring in a rich reward, both to those who do them and those for whom they are done.

3. Why did our Lord first forgive the sin of the paralytic and then heal his sickness? Perhaps because sin was the cause of the paralysis, or to show how the body is unimportant compared with the soul. If you are sick, consider whether it may not be a punishment of sin, and ask yourself how you can make your sickness a real benefit to yourself and a source of glory to God.

Eighth Week: Sunday.

The Vocation of St. Matthew.

St. Matt. ix. 9.

Our Lord, passing by the house where the custom-dues were received, sees Matthew, one of the chief of those who acted as agents of the government in collecting the revenues, sitting engaged in his craft. He simply says: "Follow Me," and leaving all things, Matthew instantly obeys.

1. There is nothing that is so great a snare to a man as a greed of gold. It is a passion that grows with advancing years; it is never satiated. The more a man has, the more he craves for. It has a power to tie the soul to earth more than any other passion. The love of money, says St. Paul, is the root of all evil. Have you a love of money, or at least of getting for yourself the best of everything?

2. Yet the voice of Christ, and the grace He pours into the heart, can overcome even this passion for riches. Matthew loved his money dearly, but when he heard the voice of the Son of God calling him, the heaps of gold lost their bewitching power. He heard a voice within, unheard by those around, which echoed the words of Christ. He saw a hand which beckoned him away. Thus it is when Christ calls. He always gives to the soul a motive impulse which to a man of good-will is simply irresistible.

3. Matthew did not hesitate. Up he got there and then, when he heard that Voice calling unmistakeably. To put off would have been fatal. Learn from him the happiness and necessity of prompt obedience.

Eighth Week: Monday.

The Feast in Matthew's House.

St. Matt. ix. 10—14.

St. Matthew invites Jesus to a feast in his house, and many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Him. The Pharisees are scandalized, but Jesus answers: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance."

1. Observe the scene. The Divine Master with that motley crowd gathering eagerly round Him. They are not a class that would be called respectable. Yet how dear they are to Him, and dear by reason of their misery, dear because of their good-will, dear because of the virtue of which they are capable, and to which He desired to raise them. When I am inclined to slight or despise the fallen, I should remember how dear they are to Jesus, perhaps far dearer than I, in my pride and self-sufficiency.

2. See the Pharisees, who are scandalized. They were scandalized because they were themselves so worthless in the sight of God. To be easily scandalized marks a low standard of virtue. To attribute unworthy motives, shows that our motives are of the same kind. I must remember this when I am inclined to take offence and to condemn others. I resemble those Pharisees who were scandalized at the mercy and tender compassion of the Son of God.

3. Jesus came, not to call the just, but sinners. He came to heal the sickness of the soul. This was His mission upon earth; it is His mission still. I am a sinner, a great sinner. O my Lord, I am indeed such, no whole part is in me. O heal me in Thy mercy! If Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.

Eighth Week: Tuesday.

The Miracle at the Probatic Pool.

St. John v. 2—9.

At the Probatic Pool at Jerusalem lay a number of sick persons, waiting for the miraculous moving of the water, after which the first person who entered the water was cured. Our Lord, taking pity on a sick man who had lain there for thirty-eight years, bids him take up his bed and walk.

1. The tendency of the present day is to give a natural explanation to all phenomena whatsoever. The sceptic attributes the virtue of all miraculous springs to their medicinal properties. Not so the loyal Catholic; not so any one who believes Scripture is the Word of God; for we read that an Angel descended and the water was moved, and the power to heal was then received. God has the same power now and exercises it. Make a strong act of faith in the continuance in the Church of the power to work miracles.

2. One poor man had been there for thirty-eight years, but never had succeeded in getting into the water first. What a time to wait! Must he not have lost heart? No, he somehow was convinced that he should be cured in the end. And cured he was. God loves the persevering and the confident. Those who trust Him and are willing to wait, and do not desist from their prayers, always get what they ask.

3. This poor man is the type of the inveterate sinner. Sin seems part of his nature, like this man's disease. Yet Jesus can cure it in one moment. Have I some fault that is inveterate? I have had it perhaps for thirty-eight years or more. Still Jesus can cure it. O Jesus, my Saviour, make me whole!

Eighth Week: Wednesday.

The Spirit and the Letter.

St. John v. 10—16.

When the sick man at Jesus' word took up his bed and walked, sound in limb and in perfect health, the Jews were scandalized because this was done on the Sabbath. They asked the man who it was told him to carry his bed, and when they heard it was Jesus, they persecuted Him and sought to kill Him.

1. The sick man, by carrying his bed on the Sabbath, broke the letter of the Law, which forbade the carrying of burdens on the Sabbath. But to blame him for this showed a complete misunderstanding of the precept. None could have urged it, had they not lost the spirit of charity. They read into the precepts of the Law their own hard, unyielding, cruel temper. So, too, I am prone to judge others without considering the circumstances which excuse and sometimes perfectly justify their actions.

2. Notice, too, their unfairness. They asked the man who had been healed, not who it was that had healed him, but who it was that had told him to carry his bed. They overlooked the miracle of mercy, and fastened on the point where they thought they could find fault. This is the spirit against which our Lord warned His disciples, "Judge not." It is blind to the good in a man's conduct, but has a keen eye to the supposed evil.

3. See the result of this habit of rash judgment. They persuaded themselves that they ought to punish and even put to death one who broke the Law. This sort of righteous indignation is too common now, and we indulge it against those who do not fall in with our notions, and we fancy that we are zealous for God.

Eighth Week: Thursday.

The Corn-plucking on the Sabbath.

St. Matt. xii. 1—8.

As our Lord and His disciples passed through the corn-fields on the Sabbath, His disciples began to gather the ears of corn and to eat them. The Jews again are indignant, and again Christ rebukes them.

1. It is the law of the Catholic Church that ecclesiastical precepts do not hold in case of grave inconvenience. This is confirmed by our Lord's words on this occasion. The disciples were not bound by the Law that forbade the gathering of corn on the Sabbath, because the Law did not really apply to the case of hungry men. Learn to be wide and liberal in interpreting the Church's laws for others.

2. Our Lord defends His disciples by parallel cases from history. Holy men broke the ecclesiastical law in case of necessity. The priests in the Temple break the Sabbath and are blameless. When we are inclined to condemn others we shall generally find some case in the lives of the Saints when a Saint acted just in the same way as those we are judging thus rashly.

3. Jesus gives as the reason which justified the disciples that God desires mercy and not sacrifice. The disciples had been so busy with works of mercy that they had had no time to eat. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Dearer to the Heart of Jesus are works of charity done for His sake, than a mere punctilious observance of ecclesiastical usages. Nothing like mercy! He who is merciful will obtain not only mercy but everything else He needs from God.

Eighth Week: Friday.

The Jews rebuked.

St. John v. 16—47.

The indignation of the Jews against Jesus for working miracles on the Sabbath was roused to fury when He declared to them that God was His Father, and implied that He was equal to God. He reproves them by reasserting His own Divine power.

1. How was it that the Jews were so inexcusable for rejecting our Lord? It must have startled them to hear Him asserting His Divinity, and one might have fancied that they might be pardoned for refusing to believe. Their guilt lay in the self-caused blindness which would not or could not recognize His holiness, and the Divine loveliness which shone through His every word, work, and look. In face of this nothing could excuse them. So with all who are really brought face to face with the Catholic Church, and have a sufficient opportunity of recognizing its supernatural beauty. They, like the Jews, are inexcusable.

2. Our Lord's defence of Himself is that His Father still works on the Sabbath, creating, preserving, co-operating with every creature throughout the world. On Him no law is imposed because He is Lord of all. The Only-Begotten Son of God must needs do what His Eternal Father does, and therefore as God the Father works hitherto so also the Son of God. Hence our Lord clearly asserts His Godhead,and so the Jews understood it. Make an act of faith in this unity of action of the First and Second Persons of the Blessed Trinity.

3. Our Lord goes on to say that he who honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who sent Him. So those who fail in honour to the Saints and to the Holy Mother of God fail in honour to Christ and to God. What is my practice in this matter?

Eighth Week: Saturday.

Our Lord retires before His Enemies.

St. Matt. xii. 14—21.

The Pharisees hold a consultation among themselves how they may destroy Jesus. In order to avoid their malice, He retires to the Sea of Tiberias, but is followed thither by a great multitude of people.

1. The miracles worked by Jesus on the Sabbath-day rouse the anger of the Pharisees, and they plan his Death with the Herodians. It seems strange that they could withstand the beauty of His Divine charity. But the Pharisees were proud, and pride looks askance at every good work which threatens to diminish its own dominion and raises a rival. Against this spirit we must be on our guard. One who loves God rejoices in all the good done by others, even though it interferes with his own supposed privileges or rights.

2. It was those in authority and those who had the greatest influence with the people who were our Lord's bitterest opponents. What could be more fatal in all appearance to His chance of success than this? Yet it was a sign of His future triumph. He desired to teach us that every great work for God is sure to meet with strong opposition and discouragement at first, often from those in authority, and so to cheer us amid difficulties.

3. Our Lord could have silenced or defeated His enemies in a moment. But He knew that it was His Father's will that He should simply retreat before His opponents, so He fled as if He feared their violence. So now Christ often appears unable to cope with those who hate Him and the Church He has founded. We must wait to the end before we can understand the ways of God.

Ninth Week: Sunday.

The Enrolment of the Apostles.

St. Luke vi. 12—16.

After a night spent in prayer, our Lord chose the twelve Apostles to be with Him, that He might send them to preach and to heal sickness and cast out devils. Of these Simon is the first; to him Jesus gives the name of Peter.

1. Our Lord before the choice of the Apostles, spends the whole night in prayer. He had no need to pray, but He prayed that He might set us an example. He desired to teach us that before we take any important step in life we should pray, and pray with perseverance. How many follies we should avoid, how much misery we should escape, if only we prayed more and commended our every action to God, instead of following our own natural impulses, and the suggestions of mere human prudence.

2. Our Lord chose His Apostles; they did not choose Him. He said to them afterwards: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Jesus must make the choice of us if we are to do any work for Him that will be valuable to eternal life. All men have a vocation. There is some line in life that our Lord has chosen for each, if they will but follow His call. Some He calls to the cloister; some to a life in the world; some to be married, some to be single; some to be men of business, lawyers, doctors, priests, &c.

3. The choice had for its main object that they might be with Him, His friends, companions, fellow-workers, loving and loved by Him. To this it is that God calls all. God intends my life, my profession, to bring me nearer to Jesus, that I may be with Him both in this world and in the next.

Ninth Week: Monday.

The Sermon on the Plain.

St. Luke vi. 17—26.

After this choice of His Apostles our Lord comes down on to the plain, and there delivers a sermon to the assembled multitude. It differs from the Sermon on the Mount in being delivered, not to His disciples only, but the crowd at large. Among other points of difference, it adds to the Beatitudes several solemn warnings.

1. "Woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation." When our Lord uses this word *woe*, it implies a terrible judgment to come. He tells the rich that they "have received their consolation," and clearly implies that there is little consolation for them hereafter. We may not perhaps be rich, but even those who have not riches sometimes have the spirit of the rich in their selfishness and attachment to earthly things. Woe to us if we thus cling to anything on earth.

2. "Woe to you that are filled, for you shall hunger." There are some persons who seem to get all that makes life comfortable. They are satisfied, content with themselves, and have no appreciation of the miseries of this valley of tears. We are inclined to envy them, but to such our Lord says, Woe!

3. "Woe to you when men shall bless you." This seems at first at variance with the duty of seeking to please all and to win all. But what our Lord denounces is the hunting after human applause and the intoxication of worldly success. Those who live for God always meet with opposition. They are sure to be misunderstood, blamed, thwarted, reproached. How much happier is this than to hear the applauding shouts of the crowd!

Ninth Week: Tuesday.

The Centurion's Servant.

St. Luke vii. 1—10.

A Roman centurion, who had been most friendly to the Jews, had a servant dangerously ill. When he heard of Jesus, he sent the ancients of the Jews to Him, to beg Him to heal his servant. Afterwards he sends a number of his friends, telling Christ that he was not worthy of His presence in his house, and entreating Him to say the word and heal the servant. Jesus, admiring his faith, heals him at once.

1. The love of the Roman centurion for the Jews and his kindness to them was the preparation for his becoming a servant of Jesus Christ. The Jews alone possessed the true faith. This centurion must have been a lover of truth, and this love led him to love those who were in possession of the truth. We ought to remember that Catholics are, far more than the Jews were, the chosen people of God, and we are bound to love and honour them for their Master's sake.

2. The centurion was also a humble man. He declared himself unworthy that our Lord should come under his roof. How different from Naaman, who was offended because Eliseus did not treat him with pomp and ceremony. How different from Simon the Pharisee, who thought he was doing our Lord a favour in inviting Him to his house. Our Lord loves such simplicity; it is the surest sign of solid virtue.

3. These words of his, *Domine, non sum dignus*, are adopted by the Church for those who approach the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Say them often to God, not only at Holy Communion, but on every occasion. Say them now: Lord, I am unworthy, unworthy of all Thy goodness!

Ninth Week: Wednesday.

The Widow of Naim.

St. Luke vii. 11—16.

As Jesus entered the little town of Naim, He met the funeral procession of the only son of a poor widow. Moved with compassion, He said to her, "Weep not," and straightway bade the young man arise.

1. Jesus was entering Naim with His disciples and a great crowd. But He does not therefore pass by unheeded the poor broken-hearted mother, who had lost her only son. See how tenderly He accosts her: "Weep not." He is sorrowful at seeing her sorrow. He longs to comfort her. He addresses to her words that of themselves lift half the weight of sorrow from her heart. Jesus is still the same, still so full of compassion, so kind, so tender-hearted. He does not overlook our sorrows, and He will comfort us erelong, and say, Weep not! Be not dejected. Do not I love you with a Divine love?

2. His compassion does not end with words. He stops the bier, and bids the dead man arise, and gives him back to his mother in perfect health. So now He listens to the mother's silent prayer, and watches for the mother's tears. How many a son dead to God has been restored by his mother's tears and prayers! Weep not then, O sorrowing mother! Jesus will bid your son arise.

3. On all there came a great fear. God was in their midst, and they trembled at the thought. So in our midst He dwells in the Blessed Sacrament. Have we the same filial fear for Him, the same loyal affection, the same reverence for the place where He dwells?

Ninth Week: Thursday.

The Visit of St. John's Disciples.

St. Luke vii. 17—23.

St. John, finding that some of his disciples doubted whether Jesus were the Messias, sends them to see for themselves. Our Lord points to the works that He was performing, and bids them judge from these.

1. When the disciples of St. John asked him whether the Prophet of Galilee were the promised Messias, he did not answer them directly, but bid them inquire for themselves. This is the way to lead men to the Truth. Bring them face to face with it, let them see its results and the wonders it works, and then, if they are men of good-will, they will have no difficulty in recognizing it.

2. When our Lord in His turn is asked the same question by the messengers John sent, He in the same way gives no direct answer, but in their presence heals diseases, opens the eyes of the blind, and casts out devils. Here is the test of Truth and of the teachers of Truth. Have they remedies for our spiritual diseases? Can they cast out the devils of malice and impurity and selfishness and pride? Compare the Catholic Church in this respect with sectarian bodies, and recognize in it the religion that comes from God.

3. The final test given by our Lord of a teacher sent from God, is, that he preaches to the poor. This love of the poor is a great mark of love to Jesus. A dislike for them is a bad sign. Do I love the poor for Jesus' sake?

Ninth Week: Friday.

Our Lord's witness to John the Baptist.

St. Luke vii. 24—28.

Jesus, when John's disciples had departed, speaks of him to the multitude. He describes him as a prophet and more than a prophet, so that of all the prophets there had been none greater than he. Yet in the Kingdom of Heaven One had arisen greater than John.

1. Our Lord first tells the multitude what John is not. (1) He is no reed shaken by the wind. Inconstancy is fatal to holiness. Self-will and pride always make a man unstable. (2) He is not one of those clothed in luxurious garments. Such men are the friends of kings, not of God. The true prophet loves coarse raiment and hard fare. Apply these tests to yourself, and judge whether you have any of the spirit of the prophet and saint in you.

2. Our Lord next tells them what St. John really is. A prophet and more than a prophet; the Angel sent before the face of God, one with whom none of the other prophets can be compared. What a magnificent eulogium! How had St. John earned it? (1) By his humility. (St. John i. 27.) (2) By his abstinence. (St. Matt. iii. 4.) (3) By his love of solitude and prayer. (St. Luke i. 80.) Do you deserve the praise of Christ for holiness by these means?

3. The special privilege reserved to St. John was that he was to be the Angel or Messenger who was to prepare the way for Christ. If we cannot preach the Gospel, we can at least prepare the ways of God; we can win those around us by our charity, our patience, our constant fidelity, and can prepare them to receive the good seed of the Word of God.

Ninth Week: Saturday.

The Result of neglected Graces.

St. Matt. xi. 20—24.

The cities where most of our Lord's miracles had been performed had rejected the graces offered them. He declares that in the day of Judgment it will be more tolerable for the heathen cities of Tyre and Sidon, and for the wicked Sodom and Gomorrha, than for the cities which through pride had turned aside from the Son of God.

1. "Woe to thee, Corazin! Woe to thee, Bethsaida!" Yet these were places which had enjoyed the privilege of being the scene of our Lord's most wonderful works. Yet to them—woe! Is not this enough to frighten us, when we think how many wonderful works He has done for us? We have indeed cause to tremble lest He denounce woe to us.

2. We sometimes congratulate ourselves on our graces and privileges, and we do so rightly. But we are prone to forget that every grace carries with it a corresponding responsibility, and that if we do not avail ourselves of it, it will not leave us as we were before we received it, but in a far worse condition. We shall have turned God away from us, and even if we have not actually sinned, we shall have rendered Him less ready to give us graces for the future.

3. How is it that men reject graces? Sometimes through indolence, sometimes through self-love, sometimes through cowardice, sometimes and most often through pride. Grace demands submission. "He giveth grace to the humble," and men hate to humble themselves. Examine why you have forfeited so many graces.

Tenth Week: Sunday.

The Divine Consoler.

St. Matt. xi. 26—30.

Our Lord thanks His Eternal Father for hiding the mysteries of God from those who think themselves wise and prudent, and revealing them to the little ones and the humble of heart. He calls on all who labour and are burdened to come to Him and be refreshed; to take upon them His sweet yoke and light burden if they desire rest to their souls.

1. Natural ability and human learning do not qualify him who possesses them for an insight into supernatural truth, unless they are accompanied by humility of heart. If you would have a deep knowledge of God, you can only obtain it by being humble of heart, and by praying the Son of God to reveal to you those hidden truths which our unassisted intellect fails to grasp.

2. We are also apt to think that troubles and sorrows are an evil in life. Yet how many have been brought to Jesus by a consciousness of their own misery, who, if all had gone prosperously, would have gone on in their pride and self-satisfaction to their own destruction. Thank God if you are thus humbled: when trouble presses hard, listen to Jesus saying, "Come unto Me, ye who labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

3. The Eternal Son of God chooses two special characteristics in which we must imitate Him, if we are to find a lasting peace: *meekness* and *humility*. The absence of these is the cause of all our disquiet and discontent. If we willingly take His yoke upon us, and try to be meek and humble, we shall soon find a delicious peace, rest, and tranquillity in our souls.

Tenth Week: Monday.

The Conversion of St. Mary Magdalen.

St. Luke vii. 36—50.

In the house of Simon the Pharisee, Mary Magdalen the sinner approaches Jesus while He is sitting at table, and with many tears kisses His sacred Feet in token of her contrition and love, and anoints them with a box of precious ointment. Jesus forgives her sins, dismisses her in peace, and contrasts her devotion with the coldness of His entertainer.

1. While we read that thousands and tens of thousands came to Jesus to be healed of their bodily infirmities, Mary Magdalen is the only one who is recorded to have come to Him for the cure of the sickness of her soul. So now there are many who pray most earnestly for earthly blessings, but there are few who with the same energy pray for advance in virtue and greater love for God. Yet how miserable are all the advantages of this world compared with the least progress in love of God and purity of heart! If only we knew the gift of God, we should ask for the living water of spiritual graces.

2. Our Lord not only granted Magdalen's request and healed her soul, but raised her at once to a high level of holiness. Her devotion to Him was in proportion to her former sins. "Many sins are forgiven her, for she hath loved much." Why should not I come to the feet of Jesus, and so earn a like blessing?

3. Mary did not come without a gift, and a gift of the best she had. This was at the same time a proof of her love and the cause of her success. Nothing wins the Heart of Jesus like generosity.

Tenth Week: Tuesday.

The Blasphemy of the Pharisees.

St. Matt. xii. 22—37.

On the occasion of our Lord's healing one who was possessed with a devil, and was thereby rendered blind and dumb, the Pharisees accused Him of casting out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. Our Lord refutes their wicked calumny, and points out the contradiction that would be involved in Satan casting out Satan.

1. The person who was brought to our Lord had been deprived of sight and hearing by the devil dwelling within. Satan does not work such effects now in those who are subject to his power. But he deprives them of spiritual sight, and makes them blind to the truths of faith, deaf to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, and dumb in the presence of God. Ask yourself whether in your heart dwells any evil influence which thus comes between you and God.

2. When our Lord casts out the evil spirit and restores its victim to his senses, the Pharisees blasphemously declare that it is through the power of the devil that it has been driven out. This was the lowest depth of that malice that attributes an evil source to a holy action. Have I not sometimes shared this malice when I have judged unkindly of the servants of God, and put a bad interpretation on what they do?

3. Jesus deigns to refute his calumniators by argument. He appeals to facts and to reason. Could evil be cured by the evil one? Could the devil be so foolish as to expel his own? It is one of the proofs of the truth of the Church that, among all the various religions in the world, she alone can expel the evil one from the souls of men.

Tenth Week: Wednesday.

The Sin against the Holy Ghost.

St. Matt. xii. 31, 32

Our Lord declares that every sin shall be forgiven to men except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven either in this world or in the world to come.

1. What is meant by the sin against the Holy Ghost? It is the wilful, deliberate, open, persistent denial of the known truth. One who perseveres in this, and does not retract his blasphemous words, shuts the door of the Kingdom of Heaven against himself. Grace cannot enter his heart. He is already among the reprobate. This is the sin of the founders of heresies, of such men as Arius and Nestorius and Luther. Make an act of faith in the known truth of the Catholic Church by way of reparation for the blasphemies of heretics.

2. Why is this of all sins the deadliest? Because it approximates most nearly to the spirit of Satan, who was a liar from the beginning. Because it is a sin, not of weakness, but of unmixed pride. Because it is a direct and deliberate outrage and insult to God, and a spurning of the Spirit of Love. Because its root is hatred of God, so that he who commits it would, if possible, drag God from His throne in Heaven, and sit there in His place. Make an act of submission to God, and detest the pride that rebels against Him.

3. All other sins can be forgiven to men. As long as there is not this rebellion in the heart, grace can find its way in, and even the greatest sins can be forgiven. Thank God for His unspeakable mercy, and have great confidence that He will forgive all your sins when you pray to Him with a humble heart.

Tenth Week: Thursday.

Idle Words.

St. Matt. xii. 33—37.

"Out of the abundance of the heart (says our Lord) the mouth speaketh. A good man out of a good treasure bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of an evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say to you that every evil word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

1. Nothing gives a truer clue to our character and to the extent of our virtue than our words. We talk away on all sorts of subjects, and through our conversation there shines forth before our hearers what we really are. What sort of impression do I leave among those with whom I converse? Do my words tend to raise and edify them.

2. For every idle word we shall have to render an account. This does not mean that we shall be severely judged for playful words, or words of harmless pleasantry, words which came out as it were spontaneously from the innocent fulness of our heart. These are only idle words when they cannot possibly serve any good purpose. It is the ill-natured story, the cutting or sarcastic remark, the rather indelicate anecdote, which we shall have reason to regret at the Judgment. These it is which are idle words and often worse.

3. When our Lord says that by our words we shall be justified or condemned, He does not mean to exclude deeds or thoughts. He means that apart from all else our words will be sufficient to earn the approval or condemnation of our Judge. Can I stand this test?

Tenth Week: Friday.

True Relationship to Christ.

St. Matt. xii. 47—50.

While Jesus is teaching, His Mother and His brethren are announced as desiring to speak with Him. He looks round on His disciples, and declares that there is a relationship nearer to Him than the relationship of blood, and that it consists in a perfect conformity to the will of His Father in Heaven.

1. The Catholic Church is the true family in the supernatural order. All who belong to it are brethren one to another, and brethren of Jesus Christ. The union between every soul which is in a state of grace and Jesus Christ is far closer than any possible earthly union. His love to it is incomparably greater, and He watches over it with a care far surpassing that of the fondest mother; listening with interest to all that concerns it, ready to help in time of need, providing with loving care for all its wants. Think how dearly Christ loves you, and be comforted thereby.

2. In this spiritual relationship none is so closely united to Jesus as His holy Mother. The spiritual union between His soul and hers, by reason of her perfect conformity to the will of God, was far closer than that which united her to Him as her Son. This latter, wondrous privilege as it was, was quite subordinate to the privileges to which she attained by reason of her answering obedience to every grace.

3. Jesus has for us all the devotion of the most loving of brothers and the most affectionate of sons. His love embraces every possibility of affection, and every beauty and tenderness that is possible in human love. Alas! how faint is my love to Him, compared with His love to me.

Tenth Week: Saturday.

The Sower and the Seed.

St. Matt. xiii. 1—9.

The Parable of the Sower was explained by our Lord Himself to His Apostles. We have therefore no need to search for the application of His sacred words.

1. The Sower is the Son of Man, and subordinately to Him, His ministers, bishops, priests, all faithful Christians who speak for God. But it is always Christ our Lord who speaks through their mouth, even if their utterances be the most imperfect. He makes use of imperfect means as the channels of His graces. What reason, then, have we to attend to His warning: Take heed how ye hear! It is Christ who speaks through the mouths of men; we must hear not carelessly, not critically, not as judges, but humbly, in the spirit of little children, and with a desire to learn something for ourselves.

2. The seed is the word of God. It takes various forms: Holy Scripture, pious books, sermons, good conversation, the whispers of our Guardian Angel, holy thoughts. But in each case it is the word of God, and therefore infinitely precious, and intended by Him to bring forth fruit to eternal life.

3. The field is the world and every human heart. Christ scatters the seed, not only amongst those in the Church, though for them it is much more abundant, but among all heretics, Jews, Pagans, Mohammedans. In every heart the fructifying seed is sown, and graces enough and more than enough to nourish it. Hence none are excused by ignorance, and least of all the children of the Church.

Eleventh Week: Sunday.

The Roadside and Stony Ground

St. Matt. xiii. 20, 21.

Our Lord describes the hearts of men as corresponding to four kinds of ground. (1) The wayside. (2) Rocky ground. (3) Thorny ground. (4) Good ground.

1. The wayside, where the seed is at once carried off by the birds of the air, corresponds to the hardened heart, whence the devil carries away each inspiration or holy thought without its ever sinking into the soul. Those thus hardened are of all the most hopeless. Sin repeatedly indulged has almost taken away the power of hearing the voice of God. Pray earnestly that you may never fall into such a condition as this.

2. The rocky ground, where, beneath a slight covering of earth lies a hard, stony rock, is the soul of one who has good impulses and acts on them. But he has not a firm good-will, and soon wearies of the yoke of Christ. His love for good things is a surface love; he has not counted the cost of serving God. Beware of that impulsive action which begins some good work with excited eagerness, but soon flags and fails.

3. The noonday sun scorches up the shallow-rooted plant. So trials, and difficulties, and hardships, and disappointments, destroy the zeal and energy of one who is not deeply rooted in the service of God. It is the time of trial that tests our good-will. When the noonday heat oppresses, then may be seen whether we persevere.

Eleventh Week: Monday.

The Thorny Ground.

St. Matt. xiii. 22.

1. The thorny ground in some respects seems to offer a better chance to the seed sown in it than the rocky ground. When the seed is cast all looks fair: the ground is deep, the thorns are hidden. All goes well for a time, the seed takes root and promises to flourish. But as time goes on the thorns grow up and finally prevent the seed sown from bringing forth any fruit. So the grace of God often takes root in the soul, and there is every prospect of the fruits of holiness springing up in abundance. But after all the sprouting seed is choked up by the evil influences around.

2. What are these influences? (1) Love of riches. A man gets fond of money, and makes it the first object in his life. (2) The cares of this world. He allows other interests to come before the interests of God; his friends, his position, his influence, his popularity, are put first and his duty to God second. (3) The pleasures of life. Not necessarily sinful pleasures, though these most effectually choke the word, but the round of fashionable amusements, the enjoyments and gaieties of society. O how many have been ruined by these! Have not I good cause to fear lest they in some form or other hide God from me?

3. Is it possible to be attached to these and to serve God at the same time? No, for no man can serve two masters. God is a jealous God. Woe to me if I allow any of these thorns to choke the holy inspirations of God. O death, how terrible thou art to the man who has peace in his possessions!

Eleventh Week: Tuesday.

The Good Ground.

St. Matt. xiii. 8, 23.

"He that receiveth the seed on good ground, this is he that heareth the word and understandeth and beareth fruit, and yieldeth the one an hundred-fold, another sixty, and another thirty."

1. If we are to bring forth fruit to eternal life, the first thing necessary is that we should understand the word that is sown in our hearts. This gift of understanding is not a mere matter of the intellect, it is a grace which is given to men of good-will. Two men of like intelligence read a passage of Holy Scripture; it makes a lasting impression on one and not on the other. The reason is that one has a good-will, and so God gives the grace without which all spiritual things are hidden from us. The other has not the same good-will, and so he fails to comprehend it. Hence, whenever you read the word of God, pray for a good-will, and grace, and light.

2. It is not enough to understand unless action follows, and the seed sown leads to good works, done for the love of God and under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This is the real mark of predestination, to persevere in obedience, not to be beaten back by difficulties, not to be turned aside by the attractions of the world. Have I this perseverance, without which we cannot bear good fruit?

3. Different plants bear a different amount of produce, some an hundred-fold, like the saints of God; some sixty, like ordinary good men; some thirty, like those who are imperfect Christians. Yet happy all who bear good fruit! God grant that I may be of their number!

Eleventh Week: Wednesday.

The Parable of the Cockle.

St. Matt. xiii. 24—28; 36—50.

In this parable our Lord compares the Church to a field in which good seed has been sown, but during the night an enemy comes and oversows it with cockle. The servants want to pull up the cockle, but the master orders that both should be left till the harvest.

1. The Parable of the Cockle is a great consolation to us if we are inclined to be astonished and cast down by the amount of evil that is to be found in the Church of God. So many wicked men! So much indifference, worldliness, selfishness, ambition, to say nothing of more serious sins. Can this be the Spouse of Christ? Yes, and the very existence of the evil is but the carrying out of what the Master had foretold.

2. The reason given by the master why the cockle should not be rooted up is that we cannot always discern wheat from cockle until the harvest-time. They are so alike! Hidden pride has all the look of exalted virtue, and exalted virtue is sometimes unattractive to men, and misjudged by them. Learn never to judge any one, lest you condemn one who is dear to God.

3. At the Judgment there will be no doubt as to what is cockle and what is wheat. In every action that I have ever done the good will be clearly discerned from the evil and the indifferent. When I examine even my best actions, how few there are that are nought else but good grain fit for the Master's table! How much cockle! How many imperfections! How many even of venial sins!

Eleventh Week: Thursday.

The Seed cast into the Ground.

St. Mark iv. 26—29.

In this parable our Lord compares the Kingdom of God to seed cast into the ground, which sprouts and grows up gradually, as it were of its own accord, until at length, when it is ripe, the sower puts in the sickle because the harvest is come.

1. In this parable the Kingdom of God is the grace falling on good ground. For a long time its effects are scarcely perceptible, but nevertheless it is gradually growing up, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. Sometimes we fancy that we make no progress, that we were better in past years than now. But we need not fear. The good work is going on in us though we are not conscious of it, and one day we may hope to be gathered ripe into our Master's harvest.

2. Observe that the process is a gradual one. Men do not become saints all at once. At first there is but little sign of their holiness. They have many faults and imperfections. We must not expect of ourselves or of others perfection in a week. Sometimes God leaves in His saints some manifest defect for long years. They are ripening for the harvest, and even now it may be, are bearing far more fruit than us.

3. The earth of itself brings forth the fruit when once it has received the good seed. So no grace that God gives us, no trial that He sends us, no sickness, calamity, poverty, fails of producing fruit to eternal life if it is received in the heart of a man of good-will. Often his only part in the process is that he acquiesces in the will of God and does not rebel, and out of this there comes great fruit to the glory of God.

Eleventh Week: Friday.

The Parable of the Mustard-Seed.

St. Matt. xiii. 31, 32.

Our Lord compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but grows up into the mightiest of trees.

1. The Kingdom of Heaven here primarily signifies the visible Church of Christ. How feeble are its beginnings! At Pentecost only a handful of obscure Jews, mostly of the lower class, rough, uneducated, with no special talents. How wonderful its growth! It gradually conquered the world, and that in spite of persecution without and treachery within, in spite of whole nations that revolted from its yoke, in spite of the worldliness and lukewarmness and tepidity of its children, it is still firm and strong as ever. Make a firm act of faith in the indefectibility of the Church of Christ.

2. The birds of the air come and take shelter in the branches of it. All those who fly heavenwards shelter themselves under the shadow of the Catholic Church. If they do not recognize her as their true home, it is only because owing to their special circumstances she is so far away that their eye cannot recognize her glories. But whenever the Catholic Church is well discernible, none ever turn away from her if they are winging their way to the Heavenly City.

3. In her branches all these denizens of heaven take shelter from the noonday heat, from storm and tempest, from persecution and suffering, from toil and labour. They find rest and refreshment in the virtues of her saints, in the sacraments, in the sweet consolations that God gives through her to the souls that He loves.

Eleventh Week: Saturday.

The Treasure hid in the Field.

St. Matt. xiii. 44.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field, which a man having found, hid it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field."

1. It seems at first a contradiction that the Kingdom of Heaven should be compared sometimes to a city set upon a hill, conspicuous before all men, sometimes to a hidden treasure which is known and prized only by a few. The Church of Christ cannot be ignored even by those who hate it the most. Its existence is obvious to the world; but its countless perfections and the happiness of being one of its members are hidden from all save those who have in their hearts the love of God, and the desire after Him. To me, O Lord, unfold the beauties of Thy spotless Spouse, that I may love her as I ought.

2. This treasure must be purchased; it cannot be had for nothing. A price must be paid by those who would possess it, and often a heavy price. Hence the trials and sufferings of all who would serve God, or who aim at perfection. Hence the worldly troubles which often overtake those who are converted to the faith, and the sacrifices that are required of them. Happy they who joyfully pay the price for this priceless boon.

3. The man who finds this treasure hides it. He does not proclaim to the world at large the joy he experiences from the possession of truth. He desires to be alone with God, and to hide from the profane world the graces he has received. Holy men do not talk about their holiness, though it can clearly be seen from their deeds.

Twelfth Week: Sunday.

The Pearl of Great Price.

St. Matt. xiii. 45, 46.

"Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his way and sold all that he had, and bought it."

1. Every man in the world sets before himself some end to be attained in his actions. He is like a merchant collecting pearls. Around him lie scattered a number of such pearls, real or false. There is the pearl of money, the pearl of fame, the pearl of earthly love, the pearl of honour. Men buy these, and often buy them dear. But they are all worthless trash in comparison with the pearl of great price, the faithful performance day by day of the will of God, simply because it is His will.

2. This pearl often lies concealed in a rough and rugged shell. It is found under many an uncouth exterior, in the heart of many a one who is generally despised and held of no account. Beware then of despising any. The beggar in rags and filth may be a saint, and in his heart may be a pearl of virtue exceedingly beautiful in the eyes of God.

3. This pearl once recognized in its Divine beauty, the merchant cares little or nothing for the rest. He gladly barters them all for the one precious jewel which alone will shine in the Kingdom of God. Is this performance of the will of God the rule of my life? Do I value it and by its side despise all else?

Twelfth Week: Monday.

The Parable of the Leaven.

St. Matt. xiii. 33.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."

1. Leaven is employed in Holy Scripture to express that which influences man, whether for good or for evil. St. Paul tells us to cast out the old leaven; the love of the world and of things sinful. Here our Lord speaks of the new leaven, the love of God and of things spiritual which has power to transform the soul. In my soul there is too much of the old leaven, too little of the new. O Christ, my Lord and Saviour, purge out the one and give me that love of Thee which alone can make me fitted for Thy company in Heaven.

2. What is the effect of leaven? It renders that which before was a heavy, hard, unwholesome lump, light and soft, and fit for the Master's table. So it is with the sweet influences of God's grace. The soul which before was sluggish and unable to rise to higher things, and unable to minister to the good of others, becomes active and zealous for God, light-hearted, and anxious to feed the souls of others with the bread of life.

3. The leaven leavens the whole mass in which it is placed, and extends to all the three measures. So the grace of God changes the whole soul; memory, intellect, and will, all are transformed. Words, acts, and thoughts, all feel the holy influence. Is my soul thus pervaded with this holy and Divine leaven?

Twelfth Week: Tuesday.

The Stilling of the Tempest.

St. Mark iv. 35—40.

When our Lord had finished His parables, He crossed the lake with His disciples, to avoid the multitudes. A great storm arose, and the boat was covered with waves, but Jesus was asleep in the stern. The Apostles awake Him and implore His aid, and He rebukes the wind and at once there is a great calm.

1. It was at the word of Jesus that the Apostles crossed the lake, and they looked for a prosperous voyage, but nevertheless a great storm arose and almost sunk their craft. So often, in the very work we have undertaken in obedience to the Divine command, a storm of troubles, and vexations, and disappointments arises. But, courage! the storm is only the prelude to some great happiness.

2. But not only was the voyage undertaken at His word, but He was with the disciples throughout it. Yet this did not hinder the rising of the storm. He was close at hand, apparently asleep and careless of their fate, but all the time watching to help them in the hour of need. So with His servants He is present, but His presence does not save them from sorrow, and suffering, and danger. He seems to be asleep, but all the time He is but awaiting the moment when He may intervene with greater advantage to those whom He loves.

3. "Why are you fearful?" This was His word to the frightened Apostles. This is His word to us. Am not I master of the universe, and do not I love you fondly, tenderly, thoughtfully? I have but to say to the wind: "Peace, be still," and you will see a perfect calm and untroubled peace succeed the tempest that rages now.

Twelfth Week: Wednesday.

The Legion of Devils cast out.

St. Mark v. 1—20.

Jesus comes into the country of the Gerasenes, and there finds a man possessed by a legion of unclean spirits. The devils within him beseech our Lord not to torment them before the time. Jesus expels the unclean spirits, and gives them leave to occupy the bodies of a herd of swine feeding there, which straightway rush down the steep and perish in the sea.

1. This story shows the reality of demoniacal possession, and the awful power of the devils to torment their victim. Not one, but many—nay, a legion of devils occupied the body of this miserable man. Learn from this to dread the least yielding to the advances of Satan, and remember the ever-increasing power he gains over those who give him any advantage over them.

2. The devils, when they are cast out, beg not to be sent into the abyss, but to be allowed to enter the bodies of the swine feeding near. Nothing degrades like sin; the devils, in spite of the nobility of their angelic nature, find a congenial home in the swine. So it is with men who rebel against God and are lifted up with pride. God punishes them by handing them over to the indulgence of their lowest passions, and those who would fain be like God, become like the swine.

3. When the people of the place hear of the miracle wrought by our Lord, instead of falling at His feet in joy and gratitude, they beg Him to depart. They prefer to have the devils among them than Jesus, because His presence deprived them of their swine. Alas, how many choose the devil and his sensual attractions and worldly gains to the presence of Jesus!

Twelfth Week: Thursday.

The Old and the New.

St. Matt. ix. 14—17.

The disciples of John ask our Lord why His disciples do not fast. He answers that the friends of the bridegroom do not fast while the bridegroom is with them. God does not ask of men what is unsuitable to their circumstances or beyond their strength, just as men do not put a piece of raw cloth on an old garment, or new wine into old bottles.

1. The first reason that our Lord gives why His disciples do not observe special and voluntary fasts, is the fact of His presence. What room is there for penance when we are conscious that Jesus is with us, when we hear His voice speaking to our heart. The time will come when we shall mourn the loss of Him, when grace will seem to have departed from us, when sin will weigh heavily upon us, when we shall dread the Judgment. Then it is that He will call us to penance.

2. The second reason is, that as a piece of unfulled cloth patching an old garment only makes a greater rent, so if God asked too much of beginners, it would only destroy what is good in them. God gives only graces proportioned to our weakness. If we correspond to these, then we may afterwards hope for greater graces.

3. Lastly, men do not put new wine into skins that have hardened with age. So God does not give inspirations to high sanctity to those who are rooted in prejudice, or hardened by a worldly life. He gives them graces sufficient to save their souls, but nothing more at first. This it is which often excuses those whom we are prone to condemn.

Twelfth Week: Friday.

The Healing of the Woman with an Issue of Blood.

St. Mark v. 25—34.

A poor woman, who for twelve years had suffered from a continual loss of blood, and was continually becoming worse, comes in the crowd and touches the hem of Jesus' garment. She is instantly cured. Jesus asks who touched Him? The woman falls trembling at His feet, and is dismissed in peace.

1. Watch the scene. Our Lord, with the crowd pressing Him, and the disciples seeking to keep them away. How gentle He is! How kindly He welcomes all! What special love for the poor sinner! Observe the afflicted woman stealing up, trembling, but confident, and repeating to herself: "If I shall touch but His garment, I shall be healed." Admire her faith, and repeat her words, applying them to yourself.

2. Listen to what is spoken. Our Lord suddenly turns to His disciples, and asks, "Who touched Me?" The disciples wonder at the question. Were not the crowd thronging Him? Yet He knew the touch of one who came in faith and confidence and love. His Sacred Heart was drawn to her. When she comes up in fear lest she may have presumed, how kindly He receives her! So He always welcomes those who come near to His altar with dispositions like hers, humbly, yet boldly, half in fear, but with much love.

3. Notice the actions of those around. The poor woman is drawn to Jesus by His sweet attractions. Yet she must do her part if she is to be healed. Our Lord at first behaves as if He had not noticed her. Yet all the time He was thinking of her, blessing her, healing her, making her His own child.

Twelfth Week: Saturday.

The Raising of the Daughter of Jairus.

St. Mark v. 22—43.

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, has a little daughter at the point of death. Going to Jesus, he begs Him to come and lay His hand on her, that she may live. Jesus follows him, and on arrival at the house the child is dead, and the musicians, customary on such occasions, are assembled. Jesus puts them all out, and takes the maiden by the hand, and restores her to her parents.

1. This ruler of the synagogue was a wise man. He hastened to Jesus in his troubles, and told Him of the sorrow that threatened him, of the poor maiden in peril of death. Why do not we have recourse to Him, when those we love are in danger? Whether it be that their sickness is one of body or of soul, Jesus is always ready to listen, and will always come and comfort us in our distress.

2. Our Lord will not work the miracle until He has turned out the noisy and scoffing bystanders. His most wondrous works are done in silence and in retirement, and the babble of the noisy world seems to arrest His hand. It is in the peace and quiet of solitude and calm reflection, that the soul rises to new life: it must be alone with Jesus and shut out from worldly things, in order to hear His voice bidding it arise from the death of sin and the torpor of a careless life.

3. Her parents, in spite of their confidence in the power of Jesus, were astonished at seeing Him raise their child to life. We believe in Him in feeble fashion, but we do not at all appreciate His power and His love. If I did so more, I should obtain from Him blessings and graces altogether surpassing those granted me hitherto.

Thirteenth Week: Sunday.

The sending out of the Apostles to preach.

St. Matt. x. 1—10.

Our Lord, seeing the multitudes like sheep without a shepherd, calls the Apostles, and sends them out to preach and to heal the sick and cast out evil spirits and to raise the dead to life. They are to have no gold or silver, to be poorly clad, and to depend on the alms and hospitality of the faithful.

1. The occasion of the sending out of the Apostles was our Lord's pity for the sheep who had no shepherd, and who were lost because there was no one to invite them to penance. As it was then, so it is now. His Sacred Heart still mourns over the countless sheep who have no pastor. Alas! how many Catholics sit idle when they might help to bring back these wandering sheep. Do I do what I can for these shepherdless sheep by my own exertions, by alms, above all by prayers for them to the Good Shepherd?

2. Our Lord invests His Apostles with His own powers. All of them, even Judas, spoke with His authority. So now, each priest is invested with supernatural powers by Christ Himself, and claims respect, quite apart from his personal character. Do I show respect to every priest, and remember that I am to treat him as the special messenger of Jesus Christ?

3. These envoys of Christ are to beware of gold and silver. The love of money is fatal to all, most fatal to priests. They are to live a life of poverty and dependence, as every priest must do if he is to be an efficient servant of his Master; nay, as every ordinary Christian must do in his own degree, if he is to take part in the work of saving souls. Is this my spirit? or am I selfish and independent?

Thirteenth Week: Monday.

The Instructions for the Journey.

St. Matt. x. 11—17.

Our Lord instructs His Apostles that in every town they shall inquire who is a worthy man, and with him they shall lodge. They are to remain in his house until they leave the place. If any one refuses to receive them, or to listen to them, the wrath of God will fall upon such a one for his rejection of the messengers of Christ. The servants of God must have the prudence of the serpent and the gentleness of the dove.

1. The Apostles on their journey are to lodge with some faithful servant of God, and our Lord promises that they will bring a blessing with them. To lodge and feed the ministers of God for their office' sake is a great privilege, since Christ has said, "He that receives you receives Me." In Catholic countries the visit of a priest is regarded as bringing a blessing on a house. Do you take every opportunity of showing hospitality to priests and other servants of God for their Master's sake?

2. The Apostles are not to move about from one house to another. Restlessness is always a bad sign. It is a common delusion to fancy that in another situation or house we shall do much better, and to believe that virtue will be easier elsewhere. It is a great grace to rest contented in the house and with the company in which God has placed us, and with the occupation He has given us.

3. The two virtues recommended by our Lord to His Apostles are extreme gentleness and continual prudence. Without gentleness we shall never win souls to Christ. Every good man is gentle. Without prudence we shall spoil our work by acting foolishly and rashly. Both of these are supernatural gifts, which cannot be had without prayer and self-conquest.

Thirteenth Week: Tuesday.

Our Lord's care of His Servants.

St. Matt. x. 26—33.

The servants of Christ have no cause to fear even in the midst of their most bitter enemies. Not a hair of their head falls to the ground without God's permission. He who cares for each sparrow, cares for them. Those who confess Him, He will confess at the Judgment before all the world.

1. It requires no little courage to go forth in the character of sheep amid wolves hungry for their prey. So to face persecution is no easy task. But He who made Stephen joyful when stoned, and Laurence when roasted on the gridiron, is present to each one who suffers for Him, and pours into the heart of the sufferer peace and joy. If He watches over every sparrow, how much more over every one of His servants. O Lord, give me courage in the day of trial, and help to persevere amid suffering.

2. Christ will reward with a most liberal recompense the loyalty of all His faithful servants who stand up for Him in the face of opposition. Some have to face death for Christ; others cruel suffering. Some have to submit to ridicule, others to unkind treatment. All have sometimes to withstand the influence and example of those around, and bravely to refuse to take part in evil; it may be in uncharitable or unseemly conversation, or in disrespectful words of those set over them. On such occasions do I confess Christ?

3. Those who refuse to confess Christ deny Him; not in so many words, but in joining in what they know is hateful to Him they virtually deny Him, and refuse to acknowledge His authority. Alas! I have often done this. I have been ashamed of Thee, I have denied Thee. Jesus, forgive me, and do not disown me before the Angels of God

Thirteenth Week: Wednesday.

The Warfare of the Gospel.

St. Matt. x. 34—39.

Christ comes not to send peace on earth, but a sword, to set men at variance with those nearest and dearest to them. Above all else, Him we must love; Him we must follow, bearing our cross; off Him we are not worthy unless we are willing to suffer for His sake.

1. It seems strange that the Prince of Peace should come to send a sword upon earth. Yet He knew that true peace cannot be had without war, and that in many a house by reason of Him there would arise a bitter strife, and those who love Him would have to suffer persecution of some kind at the hands of those dear to them. I must be prepared for this; I must expect and bear patiently for love of Him disagreeables at the hand of others.

2. When there comes a contest between earthly affection and the love of Christ, God grant that earthly affection may not prevail. How many have lost their souls for the sake of some one to whom their heart goes out with fond desire! If that time comes to me, I must be brave. I must remember that if I sacrifice Christ, even for one dear to me as my life, I shall lose my soul, and perhaps, too, the soul of the object of my love. If I make the sacrifice, then and then only I shall have peace here and hereafter.

3. In this, and in many other ways, I must carry my cross willingly, not reluctantly; out of love for Jesus, not because I cannot get rid of it. It is a heavy one perhaps, but prayer and submission, and the thought of Him who carried His Cross for me, will lighten it. And in the end, the heavier the cross, the brighter the crown.

Thirteenth Week: Thursday.

The Recompense of Charity.

St. Matt. x. 40—42.

If we receive one of the servants of Christ in His Name, we shall receive the same recompense as if we received Christ Himself, and we share the reward that the prophet or just man shall himself receive. Even a cup of cold water given to one of the least of Christ's disciples, because he is a disciple of Christ, will not lose its reward.

1. "He that receiveth you receiveth Me." This is not true of the Apostles alone, but of all to whom we show charity for Christ's sake; those who tend the sick in the hospitals for love of Christ, are really tending Christ Himself; those who visit the widows and fatherless in their affliction are really visiting Christ Himself; those who give alms to the poor from a supernatural motive are really putting the money into the hand of Christ Himself.

2. When we treat with charity any of the delegates of Christ, we identify ourselves with the work they do, and earn a share in the special reward they will receive. One who receives and lodges missionaries and aids in their work, or lay-brothers and lay-sisters sent round to beg, will have a part in their reward. This extends to any good work that we aid with alms or prayers or any other encouragement for Christ's sake.

3. More than this, every little kindness however minute, done, not from mere natural benevolence or affection, but explicitly and implicitly for the love of Christ, will have a reward to all eternity. How eagerly should I embrace all such occasions, and how careful should I be in every such act, to offer it to God, and so obtain the supernatural reward.

Thirteenth Week: Friday.

The Death of St. John the Baptist.

St. Mark vi. 17—29.

When Herod heard of the miracles of Jesus, he thought that St. John the Baptist had risen from the dead. Herod had imprisoned John because he reproved him for taking his brother's wife. But he feared John, and did many things at his advice. At length at a banquet, rashly promising to the daughter of Herodias anything she asked, he was persuaded by her against his will to order the beheading of John.

1. Herod's guilty conscience suspected the reappearance of the holy man he had put to death. He knew that the ill-deeds we do sleep but are not dead. When I look back on my past life, is there any sin that I specially dread, or any one who will rise up as my accuser and charge me with wrong done to him!

2. Herod respected and liked St. John. He listened to him with pleasure. He often did good deeds, and abstained from sin at his instance. But he would not give up his cherished sin; he would not put away Herodias. So in my heart is there any sin to which I cling? Any Herodias whom I will not put away? Any cherished fault that spoils my life before God?

3. How little Herod thought when he sat down to that royal banquet, and ordered in the dancing girl to amuse his guests, that before that night he would have sealed his guilt by the cruel murder of one of the Saints of God! Notice the steps that led to his final guilt: (1) unlawful affection indulged; (2) persecution of the Saint who reproved him; (3) the neglect of warnings; (4) sensual indulgence; (5) the rash oath; and then at length the murder of one of the Saints of God.

Thirteenth Week: Saturday.

The Return of the Apostles.

St. Mark vi. 30—35.

The Apostles returning, relate to their Master all that they have done and taught. He invites them to come to some quiet place and rest awhile. But soon the multitudes find them out, and flock to Jesus from all the towns and villages of the country round.

1. The Apostles give to Jesus a full account of their mission, and of all that they have done and taught. Each evening when I examine my conscience I ought to tell Him in like manner all that I can remember of the day. He is interested in every detail. I will tell Him my troubles of the day; the faults committed, the efforts I have made to please Him, the work that I have done for Him; and I will offer Him all that is good, and ask Him to forgive the many defects, to accept my works and words to promote His glory.

2. After their labours, Jesus proposes to His Apostles an interval of repose. He is a thoughtful and good Master, Who never forgets the wants of His servants. Sometimes I fancy He has forgotten me, but it is not so. If I wait a little, I shall find that He was merely devising some fresh way of promoting my happiness and my welfare.

3. The multitudes will not give our Lord any rest. Vainly He resorts to a desert-place. They soon find Him out there. Yet could He not have checked them by a word or a thought, and prevented their intrusion upon His solitude? Why did He not do so? Because it was the will of His Heavenly Father that He should suffer all the inconveniences as well as the sorrows of human life, so that no incident of whatever kind may be unknown to Him.

Fourteenth Week: Sunday.

The Feeding of the Five Thousand.

St. Matt. xiv. 14—22.

The multitudes who had followed Jesus found themselves at the close of day destitute of all food for their support. He will not send them away, but orders them to sit down on the grass, and then taking five loaves and two fishes which one of His disciples had brought, He blesses them, and by His blessing multiplies them, so that all those who are present eat and are filled.

1. The importunate crowd, which had followed Jesus to the desert-place when He had sought to be alone with His Apostles, received from Him the kindest welcome. No angry word at their intrusion; no abrupt dismissal; nothing but gentleness and kindness and sympathy and love. How differently we treat those who interrupt us and disturb us untimely, and thrust themselves upon us when we desire to be alone.

2. Our Lord's charity to the multitude did not end with words. His compassion was an effective compassion. It brought solid relief. It was a universal compassion extending to body as well as to soul. It was a prompt compassion, taking action at once to provide for the needs of the multitude. I am sometimes moved to pity: does my compassion resemble His in these particulars?

3. This miracle was a type of the Blessed Eucharist. It was a preparation for it. If Christ could multiply the loaves and fishes so that each could partake of them, why should He not so multiply His Sacred Body and Blood that all the faithful who approach the altar should receive Christ Himself in all His Divine perfections? Learn from this miracle a strong faith in His Presence in each Sacred Host.

Fourteenth Week: Monday.

The Gathering up of the Fragments.

St. John vi. 12, 13.

When the multitude had eaten and were satisfied, Jesus commands His disciples to go round and gather up the fragments that remained, and they gathered twelve full baskets.

1. Let us contemplate the scene. The Apostles first carrying round among the people the basket containing the five loaves and two fishes, and always finding enough and more than enough for each of the companies into which the crowd was broken up. The hungry crowd eating this miraculous banquet in wondering gratitude and awe. Jesus moving to and fro among them, looking to the wants of all, with a kind and cheering word for each, making all happy with His Divine presence. So now, in Holy Communion, when His priests distribute the Bread of Heaven, He desires to see all happy, and has for each a holy inspiration and a word of comfort.

2. When our Lord provides for His servants, He does not provide sparingly. He is generous and bountiful, and gives good measure and running over. He gave the crowd not merely just enough to keep them from starving, but as much as they could eat and more. So He has been and is very generous to me, and will be more generous still if I am generous with Him.

3. Jesus will not allow the natural law of frugality and poverty to be neglected because, forsooth, He can by a word provide for all the wants of His people. No fragment of the broken food is to be wasted. The possession of plenty is no excuse for wastefulness. There is a special blessing on careful attention to little things, and those who are most truly generous are often those who are most careful not to spend a penny thoughtlessly.

Fourteenth Week: Tuesday.

Jesus appears walking upon the Lake.

St. Matt. xiv. 22—33.

After the multitude was dismissed, our Lord went up into a mountain to pray. Meanwhile, the disciples were crossing the lake to Bethsaida. Wind and waves were against them, and they laboured in rowing. Suddenly, Jesus is seen by them walking upon the water. They cry out in fear, but Jesus consoles them: "It is I, fear not."

1. The disciples embarked at Jesus' command, full of awe, and wonder, and confidence at the miracle just wrought. Their voyage was a stormy and perilous one. Why did their all-powerful Master leave them in such straits? So now, God gives us some signal grace, and soon after we have to struggle against circumstances the most adverse. Everything seems against us. Has our Master deserted and forgotten us?

2. No, He has not forgotten His faithful servants, and soon amid their struggles they see One walking on the sea. Yet they do not recognize Him; in their terror they fancy that it is some apparition boding ill to them, perhaps a messenger of destruction. So too, when we are down-hearted and in difficulties, we shrink in terror from the very source of consolation. Jesus comes to us under the form of one who is destined to deliver us, and we shrink from Him, or regard the hand that would deliver us as the hand of a foe.

3. But their compassionate Master will not leave them long in their dismay. With consoling words He speaks to their hearts. "Be of good heart, it is I, be not afraid." So too, if I listen in my troubles, I shall hear the same loving voice echoing in my ears. Jesus is near at hand, though I know it not.

Fourteenth Week: Wednesday.

St. Peter walks upon the Water.

St. Matt. xiv. 28—31.

When Jesus speaks, Peter makes answer: "Lord if it be Thou, bid me come to Thee upon the waters." Jesus bids him come, and he walks upon the waves, until, beginning to fear, he begins to sink, and cries: "Lord, save me." Jesus stretches out His hand and takes him, and says: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

1. St. Peter recognized His Master's voice, and asked that he might be allowed to tread the angry waves to come to Him. Here observe (1) St. Peter's ready faith at Jesus' words. (2) His boldness in action, a boldness, moreover, which was not presumptuous, for (3) he waited for Jesus' bidding to come. (4) His desire to be at Jesus' side during the raging storm. Learn from each of these a lesson for yourself.

2. But though Peter had not over-estimated the power of His Master, he had over-estimated his own courage. When the wind swept fiercely by, and the waters surged around, he began to be afraid, and straightway began to sink. So now, how many a failure is due to want of courage. We lose heart; we forget God's power and think of our own weakness, and we thus bring upon ourselves the very failures that we dread. How many a sin, too, comes of want of courage. I lost heart; I got discouraged; I thought it was no use trying; so I fell.

3. When he begins to sink, Peter, like a good and wise man, turns to his Master: "Lord, save me." Jesus at once stretches out His hand, and Peter fears no longer, sinks no more. When our courage fails, this must be our cry: Lord, save me! of myself I cannot but sink, but stretch out Thy hand, and I am safe!

Fourteenth Week: Thursday.

The Meat that perisheth.

St. John vi. 25—27.

The crowds find Jesus on the other side of the lake, and are reproached by Him with seeking Him for the sake of the loaves and fishes, not because of the miracles that He wrought. He urges them to labour for the meat that endures to life everlasting, which the Son of Man would give them.

1. What does our Lord mean by His reproof to the multitude? Was it not because of His miracles that they sought Him? It was for the sake of the temporal benefits, not for His own sake. We must not allow ourselves to lose sight of Jesus in the wonders He performs for us. There is such a thing as an interested following of Him because of the pleasure we derive from His service. This will not please Him: it must be for His own sake that we seek Him. We must cling to Him amid darkness and suffering.

2. "Labour not for the meat that perisheth." How necessary is this warning for all! Our end in life is too often not the greater glory of God, but our own honour, comfort, pleasure, riches. Insensibly God fades out of sight, and too often, when there are conflicting interests, the interests of God are sacrificed. We accept the meat that perishes, the enjoyment of the hour, perhaps the sinful and inordinate enjoyment, and wilfully and deliberatively neglect the will of God.

3. If we knew the delicious sweetness of the meat that endures to everlasting life, how eagerly should we seek after it! How distasteful, how unattractive would all else appear! O my God, grant me the happiness of knowing and tasting the sweetness of that meat which Jesus and Jesus alone can give.

Fourteenth Week: Friday.

The Bread from Heaven.

St. John vi. 29—35.

The Jews further ask our Lord for some sign like that of the manna. Jesus answers that His Father in Heaven will give them at once sign and substance, the true Bread from Heaven; that He was that true Bread which would satisfy their hunger and quench their thirst, so that they would never hunger or thirst again.

1. The question of the Jews did not imply any doubt as to the miracle of the loaves and fishes. But they desired a proof that Jesus had the power and the will, not once only, but always, to supply their needs, as the manna supplied them day by day. This is the real test of every good influence, whether it will last and produce permanent, not temporary effects. Do my good resolutions and promises thus stand the test of time?

2. Our Lord answers that His Father in Heaven will give them a bread that will impart fresh life to the world; a spiritual, supersubstantial bread, that comes down from Heaven, the Bread of God, that will satisfy every desire of the heart, and fill the soul with joy and peace. Feed my soul, O God, with that Bread, and may it ever nourish in me the love of Thee and likeness to Thee.

3. When the Jews cry out, "Lord, give us always this Bread," Jesus answers that He is this Bread of Life, that those who go nigh to Him should have a bread that would cause them never again to hunger, and streams of the water of life that would quench their thirst for ever. O Jesus, grant that receiving Thee, I may be thus satisfied, and that all earthly desires may be swallowed up in my desire after Thee!

Fourteenth Week: Saturday.

The Saving Will of God.

St. John vi. 36—40.

Jesus goes on to tell the Jews that He will cast out none who come to Him in faith, and that such are given to Him by His Father, because He came down from Heaven to do the will of His Father, not His own; that all such who believe on Him will have life everlasting, and He will raise them up to eternal life.

1. "Him that cometh to Me I will not cast out." These are the words of consolation that have saved many a poor sinner from despair. The all-embracing love of Jesus! This it is that brings Heaven so near to us all. He yearns over every sinner, and the more deeply-dyed his sin, the greater the compassion of the Divine Saviour. If he will but come and throw himself at His feet, He is ready, He is longing, to forgive all. "Him that cometh unto Me I will no wise cast out."

2. All who come in this spirit are given to Jesus by His Eternal Father. They are His own, marked by His seal unto eternal life; and even though they may wander for a time, yet He will bring them back, and casting themselves at His feet, they will be forgiven. As long as they do not give up their confidence in Him, He will not let them perish, but will bring them safe to everlasting life.

3. Jesus earned this gift from His Eternal Father by His renunciation of His own will while on earth. This is the secret of helping others, of influencing others. The self-willed never have any influence with God; somehow He heeds them not. It is they who joyfully give up what they themselves desire for God's sake, who obtain from Him all they desire.

Fifteenth Week: Sunday.

The Murmuring of the Jews.

St. John vi. 41—52.

The Jews are angry when Jesus tells them that He is the Living Bread that came down from Heaven. They declare that He is of human parentage. Then He repeats His words, and tells them still more explicitly in what sense He is the Bread from Heaven. "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world."

1. To the minds of the Jews there was present on the one hand the general belief that Jesus was the Son of Joseph, and on the other His own assertion that He came down from Heaven. Were they to credit the word of Christ or not? This depended on their good-will. So now, belief in miracles, in the Church, in all that God reveals, depends on the disposition of the heart. Am I so obedient to the voice of God within me as to deserve the clearness of mental vision granted to the obedient?

2. Jesus does not tone down His assertions in order to meet half-way the views of doubters, but rather puts more clearly the unpalatable truths which they refuse to accept. It is no use thinking to win over sceptics or non-Catholics by a sort of liberalism and by watering down Divine truth. We must be careful not to exaggerate, but we must be careful not to detract from truth to please those who do not believe.

3. Hitherto the Divine Teacher had veiled under parables that central doctrine of the Blessed Eucharist which the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand had prefigured, but now He speaks plainly, "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh." Grant to me, O Lord, to have ever a firm faith in this inscrutable and Divine Mystery.

Fifteenth Week: Monday.

The Question of Unbelief.

St. John vi. 53.

When the Jews heard our Lord declare plainly that the Bread that He would give was His own Flesh, they asked incredulously: "How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?"

1. This question is one which has been asked by heretics from the beginning of the world till now. They have one and all denied the change of the substance in the Blessed Sacrament. They have asked the question of the Jews, and answered, Impossible! But that which is impossible with men is possible with God; and the miracle of the Blessed Eucharist is the object of the steadfast faith of every Catholic throughout the world. Thank God for the faith He has given you, and do not forget to pray for those who deny and blaspheme this sacred truth.

2. Some there are who do not deny the presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in some fashion, but answer that Christ gives us His Body and Blood by faith. Others that He does so figuratively, inasmuch as He nourishes our souls. Others that He is really present, but that the change of the substance is a fiction of theologians. Try and realize that the Body of Christ that hung upon the Cross is really present in the Sacred Host, and that the same Blood that was shed for you is received by you in Holy Communion, and adored upon the altar.

3. Why did Jesus make this eating of His Flesh a condition of life? To show us how He still loves to humble Himself; to teach us the closeness of the union that He desires between Himself and us; to give us a healing remedy against every sickness of the soul. O love unspeakable!

Fifteenth Week: Tuesday.

Backsliding Disciples.

St. John vi. 61—72.

Many of the disciples of our Lord refuse to accept His teaching respecting the Blessed Eucharist, and fall away from Him. When He appeals to the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" Peter with generous loyalty exclaims: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

1. The doctrines of revelation not only enable the true and faithful friends of Jesus to draw more closely to Him, but they also sift out the wheat from the chaff, the men of good-will from those whose pride will not submit absolutely to the Divine Teacher. In the commands of the Gospel, by His holy inspiration, or the voice of our superiors, Christ sometimes asks hard things of us. Then it is that our loyalty is tested, and it is seen whether humility or obedience is the guiding principle of our life. How do I behave under such circumstances?

2. The Heart of Jesus is pierced with sorrow at this infidelity of the children dear to Him. There is something plaintive in His appeal to the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" We little know how we wound that Sacred Heart when we refuse to obey, or when we are self-willed and unfaithful to His heavenly guidance.

3. Listen to Peter's faithful words of love, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It was this loyalty that made him so dear to Jesus. Repeat his words. Lord, to whom should I go but to Thee in all my difficulties, trials, temptations? Thou hast the words that are music in my ears; the words which are an echo of Heaven's melodies. In Thee I live; Thee alone I love; may I ever be faithful to Thee!

Fifteenth Week: Wednesday.

The Unwashed Hands.

St. Mark vii. 1—9.

The Pharisees complain to Jesus that His disciples do not observe the accustomed ceremonial of washing before every meal. Jesus reproves them as hypocrites, and as teaching the precepts of men in the place of the commandments of God.

1. What was it that so displeased our Lord in the observances of the Pharisees? It was not the mere fact of washing nor the holding to ancient traditions, but the substitution of external forms for obedience to the precepts of God. This sort of hypocrisy is hateful to God. Instead of observing God's law they violated it deliberately, and in their pride thought that they would be justified by the superior sanctity involved in practising a certain ritual which was but of human authority. Beware of formalism and of thinking yourself a person of superior virtue because you are more exact in religious observances than others.

2. The Pharisees also clung to these ceremonies on account of their pride, which made them regard it as a stain on their nobility to be brought into contact with other men. They, therefore, must wash themselves clean before they could even take a meal. Anything that implies contempt of others is very displeasing to God, just as honour shown to them for His sake receives a liberal reward.

3. To honour God with our lips while our hearts are far away is hateful to God. This does not mean that involuntary distractions in our prayers are a sin, but that to pretend to obey Him while we are really in rebellion against Him is most displeasing to Him. So also is the deliberate giving of our thoughts to worldly subjects during the times of prayer or Holy Mass.

Fifteenth Week: Thursday.

The Growth of Corrupt Traditions.

St. Mark vii. 10—13.

Our Lord reproves the Jews for breaking through the Law of God in order to keep their own traditions, and especially for allowing a son to neglect his duty to his parents on the ground that he has given to God what he ought to have contributed to their support.

1. Our duty to God can never set aside our duty to other men. The former, except in cases where He Himself directly interposes, is never at variance with any strict obligation of the natural law. He who is bound to maintain his aged father or mother cannot evade this duty on the ground that he has given to God what is due to them. Under pretence of honouring God, the evil custom of the Jews set aside the sacred duty of a son to honour his parents. Is this duty to father, mother, those about you, one which you observe with loyalty?

2. Our Lord's words teach us how careful we must be not to mistake self-will and selfish aims for loyalty to God. Those who neglect home duties for works outside or for practices of piety, or to frequent the services of the Church, are like those whom Christ here condemns. If ever there is a question between presence at Holy Mass and attendance by a sick bed, do not forget that charity should carry the day.

3. We must at the same time bear in mind that when God calls us we must be ready to leave home and friends and parents, when we hear His voice. Parental authority ceases before the superior claim of the Most High. But we must be very sure that He is calling us, and must follow the advice of some prudent counsellor and not our own in our decision.

Fifteenth Week: Friday.

Evil Thoughts.

St. Mark vii. 21—23.

"Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within and defile a man."

1. There are very few who are not sometimes tempted to evil thoughts. They crowd into the mind at all times and places, they are present before we are conscious of them; they often refuse to depart, and if for a short time they are absent, they recur again more vividly than ever. We cannot flee from them. O God! in Thy mercy preserve me from evil thoughts.

2. What do we mean by evil thoughts? We mean the presence of some imagination in which it is sinful to take pleasure, or the forming of an intention the fulfilment of which would be a sin of act. Such is the list given by our Lord. They fall under two main heads: thoughts against charity, thoughts against purity. But there are many beside, thoughts of pride, thoughts of vanity, thoughts of covetousness, &c. To which class am I most prone? And do I resist them?

3. What is the source of evil thoughts? Sometimes they arise from and are a punishment for past sins. Sometimes they come of present carelessness, or from neglect in the custody of our senses. Sometimes they arise from the frailty of human nature; sometimes from the malice of the devil. Are they always sinful? We shall see in our next meditation.

Fifteenth Week: Saturday.

The Sinfulness of Evil Thoughts.

St. Mark vii. 21—23.

"Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts. . . . These evil things come from within and defile a man."

1. Are evil thoughts always sinful? Certainly not. Their mere presence is no sin at all. They are only sinful when we wilfully consent to them. If this consent is a partial and momentary consent, they amount to a venial sin; but if it is a full and deliberate consent to that which in act would be a mortal sin, then a mortal sin of thought is committed. If there is included in the thought a desire to commit the sin if opportunity offer, the sin is thereby aggravated; as if we should not only indulge thoughts of deadly hatred, but should also resolve to injure seriously the person hated. Do I ever indulge such sins of thought?

2. Most of us are in continual danger of at least venial sins, in the shape of unkind thoughts towards those who we think have offended us, and to this perhaps we add a desire of some petty revenge. Some too are constantly tempted to indulge some sort of imaginations contrary to the angelical virtue. Sometimes, too, human affection or passion leads us to let our thoughts dwell on dangerous objects. O my God! grant that my heart may be so united to Thee in charity that I may turn away my mind from thoughts displeasing to Thee.

3. We need not be discouraged by evil thoughts if we do our best to be rid of them. They may haunt us continually, they may refuse to depart; yet as long as we do not yield, but hate them and try to resist them, we need not fear. Nay, we are earning merit in God's sight by fighting against these enemies that assail us in spite of ourselves.

Sixteenth Week: Sunday.

The Syrophœnician Woman.

St. Mark vii. 24—30.

When Jesus was in the extreme north of Palestine, a Gentile woman came, and falling down before Him, entreated Him to heal her daughter who was possessed by a devil. Jesus answered her that it was not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The woman, nothing disconcerted, urged that the whelps also eat of the crumbs from the master's table. Our Lord, touched by her humility, heals her child.

1. The petition of this poor heathen woman did not appear at first to be favourably received by Jesus. His answer to her was a decided rebuff. It is not good to take the food that belongs to the children of God and give it to the dogs outside the fold. So our Lord often seems to receive our petitions in a way not at all flattering to ourselves, and to reject us in favour of the privileged Jews who are preferred to us. Yet He all the time is only wounding that He may afterwards heal.

2. Observe the humility of this poor woman. Instead of resenting the rebuff she had received and the apparent partiality of Jesus, she admits that she is but a dog, unworthy of the children's bread, but to whom perhaps some broken meat may out of generosity be given. Do I take well rebuff and speeches which wound self-love? There is no better test of holiness than this.

3. Humility, as usual, brings its own reward. "The prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds." God can refuse nothing to those who are truly humble. Humble yourselves, then, before God, acknowledge your own vileness, then you may hope for great things from Him.

Sixteenth Week: Monday.

The Deaf and Dumb Man healed.

St. Mark vii. 31—37.

Near the Sea of Galilee there is brought to Jesus one deaf and dumb. Jesus takes him apart, puts His fingers in his ears and touches His tongue with His sacred spittle; and looking up to Heaven, says, "Ephpheta, be thou opened." At once his ears are opened and he hears aright.

1. Deafness and dumbness in the things of God generally go together. If we do not listen to God's voice speaking to us, we shall not speak aright on subjects connected with God. Every great theologian joins prayer to study: all really successful preachers have sought the help of God, and have prayed Him to put words in their mouths. He who listens not to God may utter words, but not words which will reach the hearing of those who listen.

2. Why does Jesus, who might have cured the deaf and dumb man with a word, put His fingers in his ears and touch his tongue with His spittle? To teach us the importance of ceremonies, and of using rites and forms as a means of impressing Divine truths on those who receive and who witness them. Learn to value the ceremonies of the Church, each of which has its own lesson to convey, and its own meaning sanctioned by God Himself.

3. The Church preserves the memory of this miracle in Holy Baptism. The priest touches with his spittle the ears and mouth of the infant, using our Lord's own word: "Ephpheta." That signifies that until Jesus opens the ears to hear the words of God, and the lips to speak Divine truths, they are deaf to His voice, and dumb to speak His praises. It is He who must open our ears, enlighten our hearts, and put good words into our mouth.

Sixteenth Week: Tuesday.

The Sign from Heaven.

St. Matt. xvi. 1—4.

When the Pharisees asked for a sign from Heaven, Jesus gave them in answer the red sky at evening as promising fine weather, at morning as foretelling a storm. He then reproves them for their hypocrisy in that they ignore the signs from which they might have learnt the coming of the Kingdom of God, though they are quick enough to discern the signs of the times.

1. To seek for a supernatural sign as a condition of belief is a common excuse for scepticism and indifference. Men want to make their own terms with God. They will believe on Him if He will do this or that. Thus to dictate to Him is a presumption which He will not brook; or at most it is a superstition that He will certainly disregard. We cannot discover His will by tokens that we choose at our own will.

2. In the same way we cannot find out what is the best course for us to pursue by these arbitrary and self-chosen means. God has provided means, and these, these alone, will guide us aright. He has laid down practical rules for us. He tells us to wait and reflect and pray, and to be on our guard against natural impulses, to commit our difficulties to Him. Do I use these means when I am in doubt?

3. The sin of the Pharisees consisted in their wilful blindness to the signs God Himself had provided. "If you believe not Me," says our Lord, "believe the works." The sin consisted in the rejection of these proofs of His Divinity. This is the sin of moderns who turn away from the Church. She has the marks of her divinity upon her, but men will not accept her teaching and submit to her guidance.

Sixteenth Week: Wednesday.

The Leaven of the Pharisees.

St. Matt. xvi. 5—12.

As the disciples are crossing the Sea of Galilee with our Lord, He warns them against the leaven of the Pharisees. It happened that they had forgotten to bring any bread with them, and they thought that He referred to this. He reproved them for the want of confidence in His power that was implied in their supposition that He was warning them against the bread of the Pharisees, and explained to them that it was the false teaching and hypocrisy of the Pharisees that He wished to avoid.

1. The leaven of any set of men is that which leavens the body at large; the leaven of a man's life is that which leavens and influences all his actions. The leaven of the Pharisees was their doctrine; not that it was all bad, but the prevailing element that affected it all was corrupt and opposed to the precepts of the Gospel. So we see in the doctrine of those who depart from the Church's teaching much that is good, but it is leavened by the underlying rottenness of their position.

2. So a set of men may do works externally good and may appear of unspotted and holy life. Yet if pride underlies it all, if their hearts are set on themselves and not on God, then this leaven affects it and infects all they do. All is rotten in God's sight and offensive to Him. Alas! is not my life infected by such leaven of pride?

3. Such men our Lord called *hypocrites*, *i.e.*, they are actors, playing a part and using words which are at variance with the motives of their actions. They may not detect these, but God sees through the outwardly fair-seeming action and pierces to its centre. Can I stand this test? What is the aspect of my actions to His all-seeing eye?

Sixteenth Week: Thursday.

The Blind Man at Bethsaida.

St. Mark. viii. 22—26.

At Bethsaida a blind man is brought to our Lord, with a request that He would touch his eyes. Jesus leads him out of the town, and laying His hands on his eyes, asks him whether he sees anything. The man answers: "I see men as trees walking." Again He touches his eyes, and this time he sees clearly.

1. The blind man brought to our Lord is a type of those who cannot see their way in spiritual things. They have some fault, but they do not see how to cure it; some aspiration after a higher life, and they do not see how to carry it out; some desire to labour for others, and these seem insuperable hindrances in their way. In such circumstances we must have recourse to Jesus, and ask Him to lead us in our blindness and to give us sight that we may know whither to turn our steps.

2. The blind man did not recover his sight all at once, even under the healing hand of the Good Physician. This was because he had not sufficient faith and confidence in Jesus. His dispositions were still imperfect, and therefore he was only capable at first of a partial cure. So is it often with us. The real reason for our sight being so dim and for our inability to see our way clearly is because our good-will is not firm; we are not completely detached from the faults and sins that obscure our vision.

3. A second time Jesus lays His hand on him, and now he sees clearly. We must not expect one Communion or Novena to obtain all that we ask. We must ask our Lord to return to us, to complete His good work in us, and He will not fail to listen in the end.

Sixteenth Week: Friday.

The Confession of St. Peter.

St. Matt. xvi. 13—16.

When Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answering, said to him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father who is in Heaven."

1. The question that Jesus asked of His Apostles was not asked for His own sake, but for theirs. It was a test of their loyalty, that they might have the privilege of proclaiming His Divinity. The angels and saints in Heaven consider it an honour to proclaim the glory of the Son of God: how much more is it man's highest honour to bear witness to the Divinity of Jesus. What a privilege we should think it to sing His praises, to proclaim our faith in Him, and above all, to adore Him in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

2. Peter calls Christ the Son of the living God to show that He was His Son by nature, not by adoption; that He was Very God of Very God, and not the Son of God merely as the Prophets were also the sons of God. It is this which gives to Jesus all power in Heaven and earth. He, our Brother, Friend, the sweet Lover of our souls, is nevertheless the Omnipotent God. How happy we are to have such a Friend! Why do we not make better use of His Divine Friendship?

3. Jesus proclaims Peter blessed because, under the inspiration of God, he had proclaimed that mystery of mysteries, the Incarnation of the Eternal Word. Thank God that to you also God has revealed this mystery, that you enjoy the inestimable blessings of the Catholic faith.

Sixteenth Week: Saturday.

The Promise to St. Peter.

St. Matt. xvi. 17—19.

"Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven."

1. Our Lord in these words gives the Catholic Church its charter and its earthly sovereignty. It is to be built on the rock of Peter, and Peter's successors are to rule it to the very end of time. This is what no heretic will allow, even although he allow all else. This is the touchstone of the true Catholic, viz., loyalty to the Holy See; a readiness to accept all that comes from Rome, and to obey every command and every wish that proceeds from the mouth of the Vicar of Christ.

2. Against the Church founded on Peter the gates of Hell shall never prevail. It is strange that those outside the Church do not recognize in her indefectibility the mark of her Divine mission. The tempest-tossed bark of Peter has continually seemed to be on the point of being submerged, when suddenly it has appeared unharmed and triumphant, riding over the billows that threatened its destruction. Thank God for this wondrous gift, and for your being safe in Peter's bark.

3. To Peter and his successors are given the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are therefore endowed with authority over the House of which Christ is the Lord. What reverence is consequently due to the Holy Father, and to all bishops and priests, who in their various degrees share his authority, and bear the commission of Christ Himself!

Seventeenth Week: Sunday.

The Approaching Passion.

St. Matt. xvi. 21—23.

During the earlier portion of His Ministry our Lord had but darkly hinted at His coming Passion and Death. But now He begins to teach them that He must suffer many things from the ancients and the Chief Priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again. Peter remonstrates: "Lord, this shall not be." But Jesus reproves him and says: "Get thee behind Me, Satan."

1. Our Lord does not teach the doctrine of the Cross at once to His Apostles, lest it should be too hard for them. He waits until they are thoroughly convinced under the guidance of the Holy Spirit that He is the Son of God. So we must be very careful how we thrust upon those who are imperfectly instructed or full of prejudice the more difficult dogmas of the Faith, or we may repel where we might have attracted.

2. It must have been a relief to our Blessed Lord's human desire after sympathy to communicate to His Apostles the sufferings He was to undergo. It is always a relief to human nature to tell to those we love our fears and anxieties, our sorrows and our joys. Do I try to throw myself into the troubles of others, and lay myself out to try and lighten their sufferings by my sympathy and ready compassion?

3. In St. Peter's kindly expostulation was involved a temptation from the Evil One to turn away from the chalice of suffering. Because Jesus shrank from the coming agony, He turns the more indignantly on the tempter who would dissuade Him from it. When I have to face suffering, am I thus loyal to God?

Seventeenth Week: Monday.

The Doctrine of the Cross.

St. Mark viii. 34—38.

Our Lord proclaims to His disciples that whoever will come after Him must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him; whoever seeks to save his life at the expense of loyalty to Christ shall lose it, and whoever loses his life for the Gospel shall save it to life eternal.

1. We cannot follow after Jesus on the road to eternal life without carrying our cross after Him. It is useless trying to avoid it. If we fly from it in one shape, it will come to us in some heavier form. The wisest way, the only way if we desire peace, is to accept it willingly, to kiss that holy cross, the carrying of which is the sign that we are followers of our King along the royal road that leads to eternal life.

2. To each God allots a special cross intended to school him and fashion him to the likeness of his Master. It is often a very hard one to accept with submission and joy, but it will soon become lighter if we take it up ourselves, and consider the carrying of it a privilege, just as it will become heavier if we rebel against it. What are my dispositions in regard to the cross God has laid on me?

3. Christ demands of us a complete sacrifice if we are to be His. We must be ready to give up life itself at His command. Happy indeed is he to whom such a sacrifice is granted! Would that we were worthy of laying down our life for Jesus! O Christ! give me at least the loyal desire to sacrifice all to Thee!

Seventeenth Week: Tuesday.

Loss and Gain.

St. Matt. xvi. 26.

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?"

1. The influence of the visible things around us is so great that it seems sometimes to obliterate the world invisible. Heaven and Hell are far away in the distance; and close at hand with its immediate offer of overpowering pleasure or riches or honour, is some tempting prize that attracts our lower nature or flatters our pride. Then it is that our lot is cast, and often eternity depends upon our calling to mind and acting upon these words of our Lord: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

2. Our Lord does not merely say that we make a bad bargain if we accept worldly advantages to the eternal loss of our soul, but that the gain of all the world is as nothing compared with the smallest loss of grace in this world and of glory in the world to come. If we could enjoy unspeakable happiness for a million years and no longer, we should still be losers if thereby we forfeited any merit whatever in God's sight. What utter folly, then, to neglect any grace.

3. What exchange can a man give for his soul? *i.e.*, by what sacrifice of external things can he ensure his salvation? Nothing save humility and charity can purchase Heaven. Yet our Lord promises the Kingdom of Heaven to those who give alms liberally for the love of God, and to those who make any great sacrifice for His sake. In this sense we can, through God's mercy, purchase the Kingdom of Heaven for ourselves.

Seventeenth Week: Wednesday.

The Transfiguration.

St. Matt. xvii. 1—13.

Jesus takes Peter and James and John into a high mountain and there is transfigured before them, allowing the glory of His Divinity to shine through the veil of His flesh. Moses and Elias appear, and talk with Him of His approaching Passion.

1. Our Lord chose Peter, James, and John as representatives of the three virtues necessary for those who are to behold the glory of the Lord—loyalty, charity, and purity. These are the virtues which open the door of Heaven, and on earth admit those who possess them to a foretaste of happiness to come. If I had more of those virtues, I might hope for greater union with our Lord, and a larger share of the peace and joy that He imparts to those who cultivate them.

2. Why was our Lord transfigured before the chosen Apostles? It was chiefly to prepare them for the strain that His Passion and Death would put upon their faith in Him. It was to help them by the memory of His glory when they should see Him humbled to the dust. So God in His mercy gives to us a glimpse of the happiness reserved for us, before He tries our fidelity by desolation and suffering.

3. Moses and Elias appeared with Jesus, as the representatives of the Law and the Prophets. In the Son of God the Law was fulfilled, and all that the Prophets had foretold. None save He had ever perfectly obeyed the Jewish Law or their long expectancy. So to us the first sight of the Son of Man in His glory will make our time of expectancy on earth and in Purgatory seem as nothing in the intense joy.

Seventeenth Week: Thursday.

The Healing of the Boy who was possessed.

St. Matt. xvii. 14—17.

When our Lord returned to the disciples, He found a crowd gathered, and in the midst a boy who was possessed with a devil, and who had been presented by his father to the Apostles to be healed; but they had been unable to cast out the devil. Jesus told the father that if he believed, all things are possible to him that believeth. The man answered: "Lord, I do believe, help Thou my unbelief." Our Lord expels the devil, and commands him never to return.

1. The poor boy whom our Lord healed had suffered terribly from the devil who possessed him from his birth, though he himself was in no way to blame. If these were the results where there was no fault on the part of the person possessed, what may be the power of the devil to ruin those who by their own vices prepare a home for the Evil One in their heart?

2. The condition of the boy's cure was *faith*—"If thou canst believe." How many a grace and how many a cure of our spiritual infirmities we lose through the feebleness of our faith! We do not believe that God can heal us, and so we are not healed. All things are possible to him that believes. This is our Lord's promise, and He will not fail faithfully and generously to perform it.

3. The father's answer: "Lord, I believe! help Thou my unbelief," is a prayer most suitable for us. We are conscious of the feebleness of our faith, yet at least we know that if Jesus helps us we shall believe in Him as we ought. When doubts assail us, we should cry out, Lord, I believe! When we are inclined to doubt God's love for us, our words should be, Help Thou my unbelief!

Seventeenth Week: Friday.

The Tribute-money.

St. Matt. xvii. 23—26.

At Capharnaum the collectors of the tribute-money paid by the Jews for the expenses of the Temple, came to St. Peter, and asked whether our Lord paid the tribute. St. Peter answered that He did. Jesus afterwards reminded him that tribute is exacted of strangers, not of sons, and therefore the Son of God could not be liable to it. But to avoid scandal, He sent St. Peter to the sea, and told him that in the first fish he caught he would find a stater, which he was to pay for both of them.

1. Behold the gentle and kind way in which our Lord reproves St. Peter's hasty assertion that the tribute-money was due from the Son of God. He gently shows him why he was wrong, and then suggests the course to be adopted. In reproving others, how different we are! How bitter and harsh! how violent and impulsive! Seek to be more gentle. "A drop of honey," says St. Francis of Sales, "is worth a gallon of vinegar."

2. The Jews had no right to demand tribute-money of Jesus, nevertheless He paid it. He did not stand up for His rights, as we are prone to do; or insist on a principle; but to avoid offence gave in, and allowed His rights to be set aside. How unlike we are to the Son of God, when we fight for what we consider justice.

3. The piece of money in the fish's mouth was a wonderful miracle. It is a type of many by which our Lord has provided for the necessities of His servants. If you are in need of money for some good end, have faith in Him, and He will provide it.

Seventeenth Week: Saturday.

The Dispute among the Apostles.

St. Mark ix. 32—34; St. Matt. xviii. 1—5.

On the way to Capharnaum, the Apostles dispute among themselves which of them shall be greatest. Our Lord on their arrival asks them what they talked of by the way? They in shame are silent; then He takes a little child, and tells them that if any desire to be first, he shall be last; that they must become like little children if they are to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

1. The teaching of Jesus during three years had not taught them the primary lesson of humility. They disputed for predominance and for the first place. On us, too, alas! how little effect His teaching has had! How we strive to be prominent, to be first, to show ourselves off, to throw others into the background. Alas! alas! How little have we of the true spirit of Jesus!

2. Yet the Apostles knew when Jesus asked them the subject of their discourse that it was displeasing to Him. It was the old Adam in them fighting against what they knew to be His will. So too when I thus seek to be first, when I boast, when I resent the superior success of others, I know full well that my temper is hateful to my Master. O Jesus! root out of me that spirit of pride, make me willing to be last of all and servant of all.

3. Our Lord sets before them a model and a warning. The model is a little child, gentle, docile, forgiving, dependent, submissive. The warning is that any one who seeks to be first, shall by God's just judgment, be last. I will try and imitate this model, and remember this solemn warning.

Eighteenth Week: Sunday.

On Scandal.

St. Matt. xviii. 6—14.

The sin of scandal is spoken of by our Lord in words of more than usual severity. "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh. It were better for a man that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depths of the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones."

1. What is scandal? It is any word or act tending to lead others into sin. We must not think that we have necessarily given scandal because others take amiss what we do or say, or because some harmless act of ours is the occasion to them of sin. But we give scandal when our actions are disedifying of their own nature, or tend to give rise to sinful thoughts or words or actions in those around us; then we are guilty of the sin of scandal.

2. What are the various kinds of scandal? The worst of all is when we do or say something with the express object of leading others to some sinful act. We also commit the sin of scandal when we do what we know is almost sure to lead to sin in others. We also give scandal when we do any act or say any word tending to lower the standard of those who witness it. Examine yourself whether you are guilty in any of these particulars.

3. Why is it that scandal is so awful a sin? Because he who gives scandal to others does the devil's work, and helps to drag others down to Hell. He has upon him the guilt, not only of his own sin, but of any sin committed by those who through his deliberate fault, are led into sin by what he says or does. Better, says our Lord, that a man should die than give scandal. O my God, save me from the guilt of scandal.

Eighteenth Week: Monday.

On Fraternal Charity.

St. Matt. xviii. 21—35.

St. Peter asks our Lord how often we ought to forgive one who has injured us, and proposes seven times as the limit. Our Lord replies that we ought to forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven; and teaches by a parable that the mercy extended to us will be withdrawn if we do not show mercy to others.

1. The debt of the servant to his lord was ten thousand talents, a sum the vastness of which represents what we owe to God. Yet the servant does not despair of being able to pay his debt. Can we ever pay our debt to God? Yes, through His mercy we can, for Christ our Lord furnishes us with a treasure without limit on which to draw for our necessities; that store of supernatural graces which He purchased for us at the cost of His own precious Blood.

2. The servant to whom the debt is remitted meets a fellow-servant who has wronged him, and instead of having patience with him and forgiving him, he seizes him by the throat, and sends him off to prison, till he should pay his debt. So alas, we to whom God has forgiven so much, often will not forgive the comparatively trifling injuries done us. What base ingratitude! How mean is this unforgiving spirit, how different from the generosity wherewith God forgives us!

3. The unforgiving servant is treated by his lord as he had treated his fellow-servant. Can I accept this standard? Can I say from my heart, Forgive me my trespasses, in just the same way as I forgive those who have trespassed against me?

Eighteenth Week: Tuesday.

The Sacrament of Matrimony.

St. Matt. xix. 3—12.

The Pharisees ask our Lord whether it is lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause. Jesus answers that it is never lawful, and involves the sin of adultery; that for those who can take it a life of celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven is preferable to that of matrimony.

1. Before the coming of our Lord, the Jews' divorce was sometimes permitted. But our Lord declares that what God has joined together, no one is to put asunder. This indissolubility of marriage is one of the mainstays of the Christian household. With divorce there come in social corruption, neglect of children, laxity of morals, a break-up of the Christian family. Thank God for the dignity that Christ our Lord has given to the marriage contract.

2. In the Catholic Church, and there alone, marriage is a sacrament. It symbolizes the union of Christ and His Church. It is the mystical union of Christ with His Church that gives her her resplendent beauty, and makes her the spiritual mother of countless children. Pray that you may be a faithful child of Holy Church.

3. But honourable as matrimony is, there is a higher state of life. For those who are called to it, a life of chastity is a privilege and a grace surpassing that of the married state. Happy those who have such a vocation. They are indeed the favoured children of God. They must expect many trials and perhaps many temptations, but He who has called them will keep them safe. Pray for the grace necessary to do the will of God in that state of life to which He calls you.

Eighteenth Week: Wednesday.

The Feast of Tabernacles.

St. John vii. 2—23.

When the feast of Tabernacles drew near, our Lord's brethren, the sons of Mary of Cleophas, who did not yet believe in Him, urged Him to go up to the feast and openly make Himself known to the world. Jesus does not go up at once, but appears in Jerusalem about the middle of the festival. There is a great division of opinion among the Jews concerning Him.

1. It seems strange that our Lord's own relations, who had lived in constant intercourse with Him, should not recognize His true character. We learn from this, (1) That no one can know Jesus until the Holy Spirit enlightens him. (2) That the highest sanctity is something hidden and obscure. (3) That it is part of the spirit of the Gospel that a man's enemies should be they of his own family. May it not be that in your own circle there is some eminent servant of God of whom you think little?

2. Our Lord tells His brethren that the world hates Him because He bears testimony that its works are evil. This hatred of hearing the truth and of being found fault with is one of the marks of a worldly spirit. Do I resent reproof?

3. There are very various opinions about Jesus among the Jews. Some say, He is a good man. Others that He leads the people astray. What made the difference in their verdict? It was generally the state of their own hearts. Pride hates the truth; humility loves it. In proportion to my humility I shall love Jesus and all who teach His word.

Eighteenth Week: Thursday.

Our Lord in the Temple.

St. John vii. 14—20.

Our Lord comes into the Temple and teaches the people, who wonder at the learning of one who had never been instructed. He answers that His doctrine is not His own; that those who do God's will are alone competent judges of its true character.

1. The Son of God needed no human teacher. As man He was enlightened on everything by the Holy Spirit of God. So it is in their degree with the Saints of God. We find untaught men and ignorant women speaking and writing on abstruse theological subjects with perfect accuracy and the greatest wisdom. If I desire to write or speak of Divine things, I must continually look to Him.

2. But I must do more than this. We cannot penetrate into the mysteries of God unless we do His will. "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine." That is the way to attain to truth. Perfect obedience to God's holy inspirations. Then we shall receive a flood of light from Him.

3. There is a further step necessary. We must seek not our own glory, but God's. This is the test of the true messenger from Heaven, who carries the Divine message of love to men. "He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory" He that seeketh the glory of God, he is true, and he it is to whom God imparts a clear knowledge of truth. If I am blind, it is because I seek my own honour and glory instead of God's.

Eighteenth Week: Friday.

The Woman taken in Adultery.

St. John viii. 2—11.

The Pharisees bring to our Lord in the Temple a woman who had been taken in adultery, and after telling Him that Moses commanded that such should be stoned, asked His opinion. Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground; and when they continued asking Him, replied: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. The accusers slink out ashamed, and Jesus dismisses the poor trembling woman with words of gentle kindness and counsel.

1. Observe the fierceness and righteous indignation of the Pharisees against this woman. Respectability was loud in condemning her. Is my spirit that of the Pharisees towards the outcast and fallen? Or do I pity them and long to help them to better things, and reflect that perhaps the worst of them is holier than I?

2. What did Jesus write upon the ground? It is said that each of the accusers read written there all his own sins against purity. No wonder that they were eager to escape. How should I like to have all the sins of my life written legibly for all to read? It would stop my railing tongue, which is full of indignation at the faults of others.

3. The poor woman trembling in the midst, awaited in terror the sentence of the Prophet of Nazareth. If these Pharisees had been so severe, what would be His severity? Yet from His Divine mouth there came no harsh words of reproach, but in gentle, loving, compassionate tones He sent her away consoled and forgiven. Do I show a similar gentleness to the fallen?

Eighteenth Week: Saturday.

The Man born Blind.

St. John ix. 1—41.

As our Lord passed by, He saw a man born blind. Calling him, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the dust and spittle, and spreading it on the eyes of the man, bade him go and wash his eyes in the pool of Siloe. The man obeyed, and was at once healed. He was afterwards excommunicated by the Pharisees, and our Lord, finding him, elicited from him an act of faith in His Divinity.

1. The Apostles asked our Lord whether this man's blindness was the punishment of his own sin or of that of his parents. Our Lord answered that it was neither the one nor the other, but that God's works of mercy might be manifested in him. We are never justified in attributing temporal calamities to sin.

2. Our Lord elicited no act of faith from the blind man as the condition of his being healed. Instead of this He tested him by obedience. The spirit of humble submission and unquestioning obedience is the surest way of obtaining graces from God. The prayer of him that humbleth himself pierceth the clouds, and those who are obedient to God will find that God listens to them in all that they desire of Him.

3. The Pharisees were indignant with Jesus because He had healed this man on the Sabbath, and with the man because He was loyal to Jesus. They cast him out of the synagogue in public disgrace. So many are now persecuted in one way or another because they are faithful to their consciences. But Jesus had not forgotten him, and He will never forget any who endure persecution for His sake.

Nineteenth Week: Sunday.

The Good Shepherd.

St. John x. 1—18.

Our Lord proclaims Himself the Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep and knows them all. He lays down His life of Himself, though at the same time He does so at the command of His Father.

1. The Good Shepherd makes the welfare of the sheep His first care. For this He sacrifices all His personal comfort and interests. For them He endures cold, hunger, peril, thirst, fatigue. For them He is willing to sacrifice life itself. What a picture is this of Jesus! He has the interest of each one of His flock so close to His Heart that for each He was willing to die. He seeks them in the desert whither they have wandered, dresses their wounds, carries them on His shoulders. O gentle Shepherd! may I appreciate Thy love for me, Thy poor wandering sheep!

2. He knows each one of His sheep, thinks of each, plans the welfare of each, gives to each sweet pasture and the water of life. He loves each far better than any loves himself, for He loves them with a Divine love. Why do I so often run counter to His love? What folly it is! He knows what is good for me, and loves me so fondly that the only limit to His love is the feebleness of my love for Him.

3. It is of His own accord that He lays down His life, for He chose voluntarily this life of subjection as Man. But this life once chosen, all His actions were done under obedience to His Father's command. This is the glory of a self-chosen life of obedience; it is a close imitation of the life of Christ on earth.

Nineteenth Week: Monday.

The Spirit of the Gospel.

St. Luke ix. 51—62.

When a village of the Samaritans refused to receive our Lord, because He was on His way to Jerusalem, SS. James and John propose to call down fire from heaven upon them in punishment of their rejection of Him. Jesus rebukes them. "You know not of what spirit you are." The Son of Man is come not to destroy men's lives, but to save them.

1. These Samaritans refused to receive those whose faces were set to go up to Jerusalem. They hated the Jews and their Holy City. So now those who have turned their faces in the direction of the City of God are often rejected by the world. "No Catholics need apply." Those who are faithful to their conscience are driven out of house and home. Happy those who thus suffer for justice' sake!

2. SS. James and John are filled with indignation, and propose to invoke vengeance from Heaven on the evil-doers. They wanted to see them suffer as they deserved. This impulsive desire to bring down punishment on sinners is utterly opposed to the evangelical spirit. If we are thus angry with those who commit sin, it is not a good sign. It shows that we have the spirit of the Jews.

3. Our Lord rebukes the Apostles: "You know not of what spirit you are." Your spirit is the spirit of the Law; not the sweet, forbearing, indulgent spirit of the Gospel. Bitterness and indignant zeal destroys the souls of men; it strangles them from the birth. The Son of Man is come to save, not to destroy; to win by love, not to compel by terror. What is my spirit? Is it meek, humble, patient, gentle?

Nineteenth Week: Tuesday.

Some Conditions of following Christ.

St. Luke ix. 57—62.

As our Lord walked along He was accosted (1) By one who expressed a desire to follow Him whithersoever He went. Christ reminds him that this would involve poverty and a giving up of all the comforts of home. (2) By one who was willing to follow Him not at once, but after his father's funeral. Christ urged him to obey at once the call of God. (3) By another who desired to bid farewell to his relations before following Jesus. He is reminded that none who turn back are fit for the Kingdom of God.

1. The answer to the first of these brings out the spirit of poverty necessary to the followers of Christ. They must be ready to leave house and home, and to have nowhere to lay their head, to be destitute and forsaken by all, if God requires it of them. Should I accept those hardships if I knew that loyalty to God demanded it?

2. The second man asked what was good in the natural order. He desired to take care of his aged father until his death. But our Lord had called him: "Follow Me"—and to this call all else must yield. Here we have the necessity of obedience to the disciples of Jesus.

3. The third still clung to his home affections, and was not prepared to give them up at once for the love of Christ. The spirit of chastity requires that we should put away any sort of human affection which renders it impossible for us to give our hearts to Christ. He who casts longing looks after that which excludes the love of Christ, is unfit for the Kingdom of God. Christ will not brook a rival in our hearts.

Nineteenth Week: Wednesday.

The Mission of the Seventy.

St. Luke x. 1—6.

Our Lord about this time sent seventy of His disciples to preach in all the cities whither He was to go. They were commissioned with His authority, and those who rejected them would bring upon themselves judgment. Their mission was most successful, and the very devils obeyed their command. On their return our Lord warns them not to rejoice at this so much as at the knowledge that their names are written in Heaven.

1. The Apostles formerly sent out represented the Bishops of the Church; the Seventy represent the priests. Both carry the authority of Christ, and our Lord threatens the most terrible judgment on those who receive them not. Pray that you may never reject the voice of God speaking to you by the mouth of His priests, or by His holy inspirations, or by Holy Scripture, or the lives and writings of saints.

2. The Seventy had a joyful mission. What joy so great as that of co-operating with Christ in the salvation of men, and of seeing devils cast out from the heart of sinners as we urge them to penance? This is the pure and holy joy that belongs to those who labour and suffer for Christ, and begin even here to share His joy.

3. Yet there is a higher joy, and one which must come first of all in the hearts of those who love to serve Christ. It is the joy that comes from being united to Him in supernatural charity, and from the consequent conviction that we are destined, unless we should deliberately forsake Him (which God forbid), that our names are written in the Book of Life.

Nineteenth Week: Thursday.

The Good Samaritan.

St. Luke x. 25—37.

A lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to attain to eternal life. Our Lord answers that he must love God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself. In answer to the lawyer's inquiry, Who is his neighbour? our Lord tells the well-known story of the Good Samaritan, and elicits from this questioner the confession that it was the stranger, not the priest or Levite, who was the true neighbour to the man who fell among thieves.

1. Our Lord requires of us that we should love our neighbour *as ourselves.* This seems a high standard to ask of ordinary Christians, but nothing else will satisfy Christian charity. We must treat them as we should, under similar circumstances, expect that they would treat us. We must put ourselves in their place and act accordingly. Do I always observe this rule? Do I show charity to others where I should look for charity from them, and forgive them as I hope to be forgiven?

2. The Levite and priest had doubtless some excuse for passing on their way and leaving the wounded man in his distress. They were pressed for time; they had important business; the thieves might attack them if they lingered. We can always find excuses for the neglect of charity. Do I do so?

3. See the characteristics of the charity of this Samaritan. (1) He took great personal trouble. (2) Showed him the most tender care. (3) Sacrificed his own comfort, setting him on his own ass, and taking him to the inn. (4) Spending money freely. (5) Commending him to the care of others. Do I exercise a charity like his to all, even strangers, who come in my way?

Nineteenth Week: Friday.

Martha and Mary.

St. Luke x. 38—42.

At Bethany, Martha and her sister Mary used to entertain Jesus hospitably. Martha busied herself with much serving, but Mary sat at our Lord's feet and listened to His words. Martha came to complain to Him that her sister had left her to serve alone. Jesus answered, "Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the best part that shall not be taken away from her."

1. Martha and Mary are the patterns of the active and the contemplative life. Both are admirable, and our Lord in no way rebukes St. Martha for her activity. But she was not satisfied with showing her own zeal: her complaint implies that her sister did wrong in not following her example. Are we inclined to blame those who spend their time in prayer instead of active benevolence? We should remember how our Lord rebuked Martha.

2. There was another imperfection in Martha. She was careful and troubled. She did not fulfil the condition given by Thomas à Kempis for an intimate friendship with Jesus: "Be peaceful and quiet, and Jesus will be with thee." We ought never to be "put out," never disquieted or troubled, when all things around us are not as we wish.

3. Mary sat at the Lord's feet and heard His word. Here is the secret of all sanctity: obedience to the voice of Jesus. This is the one thing necessary, this is what I must do: I must place myself before the Blessed Sacrament, pray for guidance and help, and listen to what Jesus says to me.

Nineteenth Week: Saturday.

How to Pray.

St. Luke xi. 1—13.

The Apostles ask our Lord how they ought to pray, and He gives them the Lord's Prayer as a form to be constantly used. He then illustrates the necessity of persistence in prayer by the parable of the man who desires to rouse his sleeping neighbour that he may give him some provisions for a friend.

1. The repetition of one prayer is not a vain repetition. It is the natural expression of an intense desire to be heard. Our Lord repeated over and over again His prayer in the Garden, and His prayer on the Cross: "Father, forgive them." If we are desirous of some grace, what can we do better than kneel before the altar and ask for it again and again?

2. The parable told by our Lord is a strong incentive to perseverance in prayer. We are to deal with Almighty God as a man who needs provisions at an unreasonable hour deals with his next-door neighbour. He knocks, and when refused knocks again and yet again; louder and even louder, until at length he obtains his request through sheer persistency. So we are sure to obtain our requests from God if we are sufficiently persistent.

3. God is pleased at such perseverance. He is not like men who are annoyed at such repeated petitions. He will give us a good gift of which the excellence will be increased not diminished by our continued requests. God delights to give good gifts to those who ask Him, and He will give the Holy Spirit to them in plenteous measure.

Twentieth Week: Sunday.

The Divided House.

St. Luke xi. 14—24.

When the Pharisees accused our Lord of casting out devils by the aid of the prince of the devils, Jesus, seeing their thoughts, reminded them that such a division of the kingdom of Satan against itself would infallibly bring it to ruin, and that it is by the finger of God alone that devils can be cast out. The indwelling demon keeps possession in peace till a stronger than he takes away his armour and distributes the prey won from him.

1. Our Lord condescends to argue with some one who imagined that He expelled the devils from the bodies of men by some magic arts, derived from Satan himself. Satan would not be so misguided as to expel his own followers. Such a division of his kingdom against itself would soon bring it to nought. So we may be sure that those who exercise a beneficial influence on the characters of others and lead those with whom they are brought into contact to love virtue and forsake sin, are themselves actuated by good and holy motives and are doing the work of God.

2. "A house divided against itself shall fall." Unity of action is the secret of success. How many good works have been ruined by internal dissensions! Nay, it is impossible that any house or family or society can prosper, if it is divided against itself. Hence beware of grumbling, of ill-feeling, of party spirit, or of friendship for some to the exclusion of others.

3. Satan, the strong man, retained his dominion in peace until Christ, stronger than he, wrested his power from him. Now he lies crushed and feeble, full of malice as ever, but forced to relinquish his prey at Christ's command.

Twentieth Week: Monday.

The Divine Maternity.

St. Luke xi. 27, 28.

While our Lord was addressing the crowd, a woman cried out, "Blessed is the womb that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck." But He said, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it."

1. The woman who proclaimed the glory of Mary in being the Mother of God is a type of the Catholic Church, who rejoices to bear witness to the splendours of her Divine Maternity. It is Mary's relation to her Divine Son that is the source of all her perfections, and this title of Mother of God is necessary to safeguard our belief in the Divinity of her Son, and wherever it is set aside Jesus is neglected. In honouring her we are really honouring Jesus. O Mary, Mother of God, may we ever honour thee, and through thee Jesus our Lord!

2. Mary has a higher claim to be declared Blessed. The glory even of the Divine Maternity is subordinate to the glory of her unfailing obedience to every wish and command of Almighty God. This it is which exalts her to the highest place in Heaven. She was faithful to the will of God amid sorrows and desolation such as none but her ever experienced of all the creatures that God made. This is the glory of the creature—simply to carry out the will of the Creator.

3. To earn this blessing fully we must listen carefully for every word of God, and for every holy thought He whispers in our ears. We must also treasure them up as Mary did, often think of them, and pray that we may never have any rule of life save the holy will of God.

Twentieth Week: Tuesday.

The Rich Fool.

St. Luke xii. 13—22.

One of the crowd appeals to Jesus to speak to his brother that he may divide his inheritance with him. Our Lord refuses to interfere, and warns those present against covetousness, telling how a certain rich man proposed to himself many years of satisfied enjoyment of all the goods he had accumulated. God said to him, "Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

1. There is nothing more dangerous to our salvation than a grasping, avaricious spirit. It grows with advancing age, and unlike other worldly pleasures, it loses not its zest as years go on. It has a fatal power to tie down the soul to earth, and make a man averse from heavenly things and from submission to God. Am I fond of money? or if I have no opportunity of money-making, am I fond of anything upon earth for its own sake and apart from God?

2. What folly is any attachment to money or goods or anything else upon earth? The moment of death arrives, and then what avail all earthly possessions? Nay, they are a curse to him who has trusted in them. O death, how terrible thou art to a man who has peace in his possessions!

3. The story of the rich fool was told by our Lord on the occasion of one asking Him to interfere between himself and his brother in respect of some disputed inheritance. Our Lord's refusal is a warning not to entangle ourselves with the affairs of others which do not concern us. How much mischief has been done by the meddlesome interference of well-meaning men!

Twentieth Week: Wednesday.

Watch!

St. Luke xii. 35—49.

To those who are always prepared for the coming of their Lord, and continually seeking to do His will, is promised in His Kingdom an almost incredible privilege. He will make them sit down to meat, and will minister to them Himself at the celestial banquet. On the contrary, those who do not carry out His will, though they know it well, will be beaten with many stripes.

1. "Blessed is the servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching." To watch for any one implies that we are continually thinking of him, and looking forward to and preparing for his return. He who is watching when Christ shall summon him is one who has made His will the rule of his life, who often in prayer seeks to know His will, who bears Him continually in mind. Do I fulfil these conditions?

2. What a reward is promised to those who are found watching! Christ Himself will minister to their wants; He will make them sit down at the heavenly feast, and will treat them as those who had done Him a service. He will actually minister to them Himself, giving them rich draughts of the water of life, and feeding their souls with food which will contain all possible sweetness, and fill them with all possible joy. How trifling then will appear all the sorrows and trials of earth!

3. Those who are not watching, but taking their ease, with no care for their Master's command, will receive stripes in proportion to the clearness of their knowledge of what was required of them. What reason, then, have I to tremble, to whom so much light and grace has been given!

Twentieth Week: Thursday.

The Unfruitful Fig-tree.

St. Luke xiii. 6—9.

In the vineyard of a certain man was a fig-tree which for three years had borne no fruit, but only leaves. At length the owner bids the gardener cut it down, but he intercedes for it, that it may be spared for one year more, promising that he will dig around it, and spread dung about its roots. If it bear no fruit during the coming year, he will raise no further objection to cutting it down.

1. Every Christian performs a number of good works which may all be referred to one or other of two classes. Some are acts of natural virtue, beautiful perhaps and marking a healthy tree, but of no solid value in God's sight, receiving their reward here, not hereafter. Other actions are supernatural, informed by the grace of God, done for love of Him. These are the rich fruit, pleasing to God, which shall endure to everlasting life. Are all my good actions done from a supernatural motive? If not, they are mere leaves, showy but valueless, to be buried in the fall of the year.

2. The tree that year after year bears no fruit is cut down, while that which bears fruit is pruned that it may bring forth more fruit. As years go on, does the fruit I bear continually increase? Or is there a gradual diminution in the amount of it, and do I approach the time when our Lord shall say, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"

3. How patient our Lord has been with me! How He has waited, hoping that before it is too late, I will begin to correspond to His grace, and work for Him and not for self! Grant me this grace, O Lord, beyond all other graces, that I may never neglect Thy grace, nor fail of doing what Thou dost ask of me!

Twentieth Week: Friday.

The Narrow Gate.

St. Luke xiii. 23—27.

When our Lord was questioned as to the number of the saved, He answered by urging His disciples to enter by the narrow gate, and warning them that many shall seek to enter, but in vain.

1. No one knows, save God, the number of the elect. It is no business of ours. What concerns us is the knowledge that if we desire to enter by the narrow gate that leads to life, we must exert ourselves, resist our inclinations, endure hardships, submit to the yoke, humble ourselves, and pray for the grace of God, without which none can be saved. Do I make such an effort as is necessary to win the Kingdom of Heaven?

2. It is useless to think that we can go on all our lives living for self and resisting the grace of God, and when we draw near to death, can offer a prayer which will undo the past, and open to us the gate of Heaven. We must knock now, if we desire to be heard, we must make friends now with the Master of the house, if we desire that He will then welcome us as His own; we must earn His gratitude now by our charity to others for His sake and by our submission to His will. Then and then only shall we meet Him with joy.

3. How terrible to hear Christ say, "I know you not!" Better a thousand deaths than that one word from the Lord of Heaven and earth. What would Jesus say of me now? Am I one of those of whom He would say, "I know My sheep, and am known of them"? Or would He say, "I know you not, depart from Me?"

Twentieth Week: Saturday.

On Self-Exaltation.

St. Luke xiv. 7—11.

Our Lord observing how those invited to a feast chose for themselves the highest places, exhorts them to sit down not in the highest, lest their entertainer afterwards request them to give place to others, but in the lowest, that they may have the honour of being invited to go up higher.

1. This struggle for the highest place was not limited to the Jews. It still is the ordinary law of society. All seek their own, and are unwilling to give way to others, and are pained if they are not treated with the honour that they think they deserve. The cause of their discontent and vexation is their pride, and love of self rather than of God.

2. Our Lord seems to set before His hearers a very low motive. He does not tell them to take the lowest place because they ought to regard themselves as worthy of it, but simply that so they may have glory before those at table, and may avoid the ignominy of having to move down. It would have been fruitless to put before them any lofty and exalted motive. So if we are not influenced to virtue by the love of God, at least our own interest will perhaps move us.

3. Christ's object was gradually to lead the Jews to something nobler. He knew that the practice of humility even from an inferior motive would lead on to a love of it for its own sake, and because it is pleasing to God. It is wonderful how soon any acts of virtue bring their own reward, and lead us to love virtue itself, and Him of whose beauty all human virtue is but a faint reflection.

Twenty-first Week: Sunday.

The Great Supper.

St. Luke xiv. 15—24.

Our Lord compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a feast to which many guests are invited. But they all excuse themselves on one plea or another: their host, angry at their refusal, brings in the poor and the feeble and the blind and the lame, to take their places at his table.

1. Our Lord invites all men to serve Him in one or another way. Some are called into the Catholic Church from heresy; others to the religious life or to the priesthood; others to a life of resignation under some great suffering. All these are summoned thus as a preparation for that Heavenly Feast which He intends in His own good time to bestow upon all who are obedient to His summons. God has invited me; have I obeyed His call?

2. There are many who do not like the Divine summons. The invitation involves the relinquishment of something to which their heart clings, money or position, or earthly affections, or self-will, so they excuse themselves. "It is impossible for me to obey because I have my business to attend to, or my relations to please, or my way to make in the world." Alas! how unhappy the lot of such. Have I ever rejected any such grace?

3. In place of those who reject the call of God, He sends His servants into the highways to bring in the poor and the lame and the feeble. Perhaps this is the way that I have entered His service. Some other refused a grace from God, and it came to me, unworthy as I am of such an offer. Anyhow the grace came to me, and through God's mercy I accepted it, and it has placed me where I am. How can I ever thank God as I ought for His wonderful mercy to me?

Twenty-first Week: Monday.

The Lost Sheep.

St. Luke xv. 1—7.

When the Scribes and Pharisees murmured at our Lord for consorting with publicans and sinners, He asked them whether a man who has lost one out of a flock of sheep does not seek the wanderer, leaving the rest in the fold, and bring it back with joy. So the Good Shepherd calls the Angels to rejoice over every sinner who does penance.

1. How our Lord loves sinners! He seems to find happiness in their company. He eats and drinks with them, He converses with them as their friend and comforter and the lover of their souls. For them not a harsh word, nothing but looks of compassion and love. O Friend of sinners, have mercy on me, a sinner.

2. But not all sinners does He thus befriend, only those who are conscious of their misery and lament over it and cast longing glances towards Him, and cherish amid all their sins at least a faint spark of hope that He will set them free. Then He fans that spark into a flame of love and delivers them from their chains, and brings them in humble penitence to His feet. Then it is that His Sacred Heart is full of joy. O Heart of Jesus! who can ever fathom the depth of Thy love for the sinner who does penance!

3. Jesus is not alone in His joy. All the Saints and Angels in Heaven rejoice with Him. He calls them together to sing a hymn of triumph over the return of the wanderer, and they rejoice one and all with joy unspeakable at the triumph of Divine grace. O Jesus, grant me the privilege of taking part in the Divine work of bringing sinners back to Thee!

Twenty-first Week: Tuesday.

The Lost Groat.

St. Luke xv. 8—10.

What woman, asks our Lord, who has lost one out of ten pieces of money, will not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, till she find it? And when she has found it, she calls together friends to congratulate her on finding the lost coin.

1. As the shepherd seeking the wandering sheep represents our Blessed Lord, so the woman searching for the lost groat represents His Sacred Spouse the Church. She laments over every sinner lost to grace and leaves no means untried to regain him. The Church of Christ regards the loss of a single soul as an evil of sufficient importance to occupy her whole thoughts until she has regained the treasure lost. We do not estimate as we ought the value of a soul and the irreparable evil of a single mortal sin.

2. What means does the woman in the parable employ? She lights a candle, since he that will be reformed and recover the grace of God must come to the light that his deeds may be reproved. She sweeps the house, for the dust and dirt of sin must be cleared away before there can be true penance, and she searches diligently as every sinner must do before he can recognize and confess his sins with due contrition. Ask yourself whether you search diligently into your heart and cleanse it from sin, and make use of the light that God gives to the children of the Church.

3. The Church rejoices exceedingly over every sinner doing penance, and calls on all the saints to rejoice with her. Every conversion to God adds to the joy of every saint in Heaven. What a privilege then to take part in the conversion of sinners to God!

Twenty-first Week: Wednesday.

The Prodigal Son: his Departure.

St. Luke xv. 11.

A certain man had two sons: and the younger said to his father, Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided to them his substance. Not many days after, the younger departed to a far country and there wasted his substance, living riotously. After a time he began to be in want.

1. The beginning of the fall of the Prodigal Son was a desire for independence. He did not like the yoke of parental authority and the secondary position he held as the younger son in his father's house. He wanted to have his liberty and to be able to do as he liked. This is the beginning of every fall; secret pride making us unwilling to submit and to be thwarted and to do the will of others.

2. The consequence of this spirit of pride in the younger son was to make him restless and discontented. He was not happy in his father's house. He longed to be elsewhere. Restlessness is almost always a sign of pride; it is one of the marks of self-will; turbulence and inquietude are the forerunners of sin to come and moral ruin not far off.

3. The Prodigal starts on his life of independence. At first it is pleasant enough; he rejoices in his liberty; indulges his every fancy, satiates himself with pleasure. But it does not last long. The devil is a hard master, and the poor Prodigal finds himself miserable, in want, friendless, deserted. Thus it is that the world treats those who live for the world. God grant that I may never forsake my Father's house!

Twenty-first Week: Thursday.

The Prodigal Son: his Repentance.

St. Luke xv. 17—19.

The unhappy Prodigal is at last reduced to feeding swine for hire. In his misery he comes to himself and remembers the peaceful happiness of his father's house, and resolves to return and throw himself at his father's feet and say: "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and in thy sight."

1. The Prodigal, in the quiet solitude, begins to reflect. He resolves to go back, and humble himself, and ask to be received, not as a son, but as a servant. Observe (1) the advantage of a quiet time for prayer and supplication. (2) The contrast between the constant happiness of the humblest who serve God, and the misery that soon ensues to those who cast off His yoke. (3) The willingness of the Prodigal to humble himself. (4) The value of inferior motives as leading to virtue. The Prodigal's repentance arose primarily, not from love of father or home, but from his present misery. Apply each of these to yourself.

2. The first impulse of true repentance is to cast ourselves at the feet of him whom we have offended and beg for forgiveness. It is not enough to be sorry, but this sorrow must include hope of forgiveness and reconciliation. I, then, will go to the feet of Jesus in all my sorrows and sins, for I know He will not reject me.

3. The Prodigal loses no time. He arose and went to his father. Delays are dangerous. When the grace comes we must act on it, and the sooner the better. *I will arise;* this must be the motto of all who recognize their sin and weakness. I, too, with God's help, will arise from all that hinders my faithful service of Him.

Twenty-first Week: Friday.

The Prodigal Son: his Return.

St. Luke xv. 20—32.

When the Prodigal on his return approached his father's house, his father, seeing him in the distance, runs to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. He will not hear his self-accusing words, but bids the servants bring the best robe, a ring for his hand, and shoes for his feet, and kill the fatted calf, that they may rejoice and make merry on the occasion of his return home.

1. The father of the Prodigal is watching for the return of the wanderer, and sees him a great way off. So God watches and longs for the sinner's return, and even before he has reconciled himself to God, He anticipates him with graces, and mercy, and consolation, and marks of His forgiveness and love. O, how gentle is the Sacred Heart of Jesus! We do not half understand its depths of love and compassion.

2. How is the returning Prodigal treated? He has the best of everything. (1) The best robe, the robe of justice to clothe him so that he may appear, not as a servant, but as a beloved son. (2) The ring of pardon to show that he is no longer the slave of sin. (3) Shoes to prevent his tender feet from being injured by the stones which lie in virtue's path. (4) A banquet of good things to celebrate his happy return.

3. The elder son, who had always been faithful to God, is angry at the welcome given to the Prodigal. So those who have not gone astray, because they have had no very strong temptations, are often hard upon those who have sinned. We must beware, for perhaps we shall find that they are preferred to us, and are really dearer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as St. Mary Magdalen was.

Twenty-first Week: Saturday.

The Unjust Steward.

St. Luke xvi. 1—12.

The steward of a rich man, being dismissed for lavish expenditure, goes round to the debtors of his employer and reduces the amount of what they owe. By this liberality, though with money not his own, he earns their good-will and the prospect of shelter when he is turned out of his stewardship.

1. We are all of us stewards of God, entrusted with what is not ours but His, to be used for Him, not for ourselves. We are all unjust stewards in that we have not done this, but have used what God has committed to us for ourselves, independently of Him, perhaps have wasted it on things that we knew were displeasing to Him; reading what He would not wish us to read, indulging in useless amusements and recreations.

2. To all the time must come when we shall have to give an account of our stewardship. What sort of an account should I have to give for my use of God's gifts? Would there not be waste here, and mal-expenditure there, and a selfish and dishonest adoption as our own of time and talents belonging to God? Can I face the day of account? *Quid sum miser tunc dicturus?* What shall I say then in answer to my Judge?

3. There is a means by which I may still ward off His anger, and that is by great liberality to others and especially to those who are poor and in want. Thus I can purchase to myself friends who will plead for me with God. Have I been a good friend to the poor for God's sake? Have I been generous with my alms? If so, I shall find that God will listen to their prayers for me and will be generous to me.

Twenty-second Week: Sunday.

On the Use of Riches.

St. Luke xvi. 9—12.

Jesus points out to His disciples that the unjust mammon or worldly riches are given us that we may by our use of it obtain true riches, and that we may purchase for ourselves with it admittance into everlasting dwellings.

1. Our Lord teaches elsewhere that it is very difficult for the rich to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Why, then, are they given to men? It is in order that they may so employ them, that they may barter them for treasure in Heaven. We sometimes see those who have spent their riches on building a church, represented as carrying the Church like a treasure in their hand. Worldly wealth spent for God, will be exchanged by Him into glory in Heaven to all eternity. Am I generous in contributing to such works?

2. Above all, those who have spent their money on the poor seem to receive a reward beyond the rest. Our Lord speaks as if the poor had the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and were able to admit those who for God's sake had bestowed their money according to their ability in relieving their necessities. Happy will those be who at the judgment have the poor to plead their cause! Have I done all I can to deserve the suffrages of the poor?

3. Our Lord speaks of those who use their riches well as being faithful in that which is least. What a contemptible thing money is in itself! but what a precious treasure if used well! It will purchase the true riches, *i.e.* the grace of God, that seed whence springs eternal joy in Heaven. What folly, then, to love riches, except for the sake of giving them away for God's sake.

Twenty-second Week: Monday.

The Rich Glutton.

St. Luke xvi. 19—31.

There was a certain rich man who feasted sumptuously every day, at whose gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus. The rich man died, and his life of luxury was requited with the torments of Hell. Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. In Hell the rich man begged that Lazarus might be sent with one drop of water to cool his parching thirst; but in vain.

1. What a warning against a life of selfish luxury! We do not read of any crime committed by the rich man. He simply lived a life of ease and comfort and present enjoyment. No self-denying charity; no deeds of mercy; no humiliation of himself; no penance; and therefore at the end of life the torments of Hell to all eternity. In my life how little penance! How much self-seeking and love of ease! Have I not reason to fear?

2. In Hell the rich man is punished in kind. His love of choice wines is requited by a tormenting thirst and a fire consuming his palate. For his life of luxury and ease, his purple and fine linen, he is enwrapped in the scorching flames. This law of retribution in kind is a terrible one; I must anticipate it. I am proud, and I must humble myself; I love comforts, and so I will mortify myself.

3. Abraham has no pity for the poor man in Hell. He tells him it is the lot he prepared for himself. We must learn the lesson, and pray God that we may have evil things in this life, if the good things we enjoy are to cost us the good things of Heaven. Pray to suffer here that so you may rejoice in Heaven.

Twenty-second Week: Tuesday.

The Raising of Lazarus.

St. John xi. 1—45.

When Lazarus fell sick, his sisters Martha and Mary sent to Jesus, saying, "Lord, he whom Thou lovest is sick." Jesus after two days starts for Bethany, and arrives there when Lazarus had been dead four days. Martha hastens to meet Jesus. Mary waits until she is sent for. Jesus approaches the grave, and cries aloud, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he that was dead came forth still bound with the grave clothes.

1. The message sent by Martha and Mary is a model of prayer in trouble, especially in temporal trouble. They do not ask for anything, they simply state their needs. He likes us to tell Him our troubles, and if He delays, and seems to neglect us as He did Martha and Mary, it is that He may in the end perform a signal miracle on our behalf. I then will tell Him my troubles, and be content to leave it all to Him.

2. See the difference between the active Martha and the passive Mary. The former runs unbidden to meet Jesus; the latter waits. It was Mary's grief that chiefly moved the tears of Jesus. He likes those who are passive until He calls them to act; those who remain where they are until He summons them elsewhere; those who wait for His inspirations, instead of following their own impulses. Am I one of these?

3. The raising of Lazarus corresponded in the physical order to the raising of the soul from the spiritual death of sin. The latter is a far greater miracle. How happy I should account myself if I have the privilege of taking part with Jesus in raising from the corruption and death of sin, any of those souls for which He died.

Twenty-second Week: Wednesday.

The Assembly of the Pharisees.

St. John xi. 46—54.

Some of the Jews present at the raising of Lazarus carried information to the Pharisees, who with the priests held a council, at which they determined on the death of Jesus. Caiphas, as High Priest, declared that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish. After this, Jesus withdrew to a distant place with His disciples.

1. It seems strange that one of our Lord's most wonderful miracles should have made those who beheld it more hostile than ever. Yet so it is: those who have hardened their hearts against God are repelled, not attracted, by the marvels of His love. They only hate Him the more when they see clear proofs of His power. So we see evil men misinterpreting the simple faith, and charity, and devotion of the servants of God. Is this my spirit?

2. What was the motive of these men? Jealousy; a fear lest they should be overshadowed, and their credit diminished with the people. They cloaked this under a show of fear of the Romans. But their real motive was hatred of Jesus as a rival to their own influence. Beware of the selfish effects of an insidious ambition and jealousy of the success of others.

3. On occasion of the council in which it was decided to destroy Jesus, Caiphas, the High Priest, declared under Divine inspiration that it was expedient that one man should die for the nation. Strange that so wicked a man should be inspired by the Holy Ghost! But it was an official inspiration. God speaks even through wicked men when they hold some sacred office. How terrible a thing to have the Word of God in the mouth but not in the heart!

Twenty-second Week: Thursday.

The Ten Lepers.

St. Luke xvii. 11—19.

At the entrance to one of the towns through which our Lord passed, He was met by ten lepers who, standing afar off, cried, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Jesus ordered them to go and show themselves to the priests, and as they went they were healed. One of them, a Samaritan, turned back to return thanks to Jesus, who was touched with his gratitude and dismissed him in peace.

1. The lepers standing far away were an example to sinners, (1) In their recourse to Jesus to be healed. (2) In their acknowledgment of Him as their Lord, and in their prayer for mercy. (3) In their obedience to His command to go and show themselves to the priests. (4) In their faith in so doing, even before they were healed. Admire their faith and confidence, and try to imitate it.

2. On the way to the priests they were healed. One of them, a Samaritan, could not refrain from turning back to thank his benefactor. Jesus loves the grateful: He will always bestow fresh blessings on those who are grateful for what they have already received. One who is thankless closes up the fount of Divine love and compassion. Hence learn very often to return thanks to God.

3. Our Lord was hurt at the neglect of the nine Jews. "Were there not ten cleansed?" He exclaims, "but where are the nine? No one has returned to give glory to God but this stranger." So those outside the visible Church may be far more grateful to God and dearer to Him than some within it.

Twenty-second Week: Friday.

The Unjust Judge.

St. Luke xviii. 1—8.

There was in a city a judge who feared neither God nor man. To him came a poor widow, asking to be protected from one who had wronged her. At first he would not listen, but at length, wearied out with her importunity, he granted her suit. So we must be importunate with God, for will He not avenge His own elect who cry day and night to Him?

1. When our Lord desires to impress upon His hearers any truth, we find Him often employing some unexpected and almost anomalous simile. Here He compares Almighty God to an unjust judge overcome by importunity. God loves importunity. We need never fear lest we should weary Him. He waits to be wearied by our petitions, and often requires this unbroken persistency as the condition of granting them. Do I thus persevere in asking for what I need?

2. The poor widow's cry was: "Avenge me of my adversary." Our cry must be the same. But of what adversary? Not of human foes, nor of those that treat us ill. Our prayers respecting them must be: "Father, forgive them." If we pray against them, God will hear our prayer only by visiting on us the misfortunes we invoke on them.

3. But there are very real adversaries against whom we should pray. (1) The devil, who tempts us, and seeks to bring us down to Hell. (2) Our predominant passion, whatever it may be. (3) Self, that is so continually asserting itself against God to our grievous harm, and is our worst enemy, which mars our happiness and destroys our peace. O God, I cannot fight against these alone! In Thy mercy, help me in the conflict.

Twenty-second Week · Saturday.

The Pharisee and the Publican.

St. Luke xviii. 10—14.

Two men went up to the Temple to pray, a Pharisee and a publican. The Pharisee thanked God that he was regular in the performance of his religious duties, and not like other men, unjust and impure, nor like the publican in the distance. The publican did not lift his eyes to heaven, but cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" The latter went away forgiven; not so the Pharisee.

1. The Pharisee's prayer was in some respects an excellent one. He returned thanks to God for the graces he had received. But he spoilt all by his pride, which caused him to prefer himself to others. God will not hear the prayers of the proud; He abhors them. Pride effectually bars the way against our receiving from God the graces which we need.

2. The publican's prayer was a prayer of humility. It recognized his own vileness, his dependence on God, his need of His mercy. This is the sort of prayer that God loves; it pierces the clouds and brings down a shower of graces. God cannot resist any one who really humbles himself. If I want my prayer to be heard, I must make certain that I pray with humility.

3. The chief end of this parable is to teach us the folly of despising any one. The very fact that we do so places us in the sight of God beneath the person we despise. Woe to us if we indulge the thought, Whatever I may be, I am better than so-and-so. If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we should perhaps perceive that we are really far worse.

Twenty-third Week: Sunday.

The Necessity of Humility.

St. Mark x. 13—16.

When little children were brought to Jesus, and the disciples sought to turn them away, Jesus was much displeased, and said: "Suffer little children to come to Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. For whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into Heaven."

1. Jesus was displeased with those who sought to keep away the children from Him. Children are very dear to Him. He loves their guilelessness, innocence, simplicity. He watches over them with jealous care. Woe to those who injure them or neglect them, or indulge them unwisely, or set them a bad example. As the privilege of bringing them up is very great, so also is the responsibility.

2. The reason Jesus gives why the children are to be brought to Him is that "of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." What can be higher praise than this? He likens children to the Angels of God. He says that they are the nearest counterpart on earth of the Saints in Heaven. O blessed privilege of little children! How different is their obedience and humility from my perversity and pride!

3. No man shall ever enter into Heaven unless he receives on earth the Kingdom of God as a little child. What does this mean? It means that we must put our neck willingly under the yoke as children do, that we must be docile as children are, that we must have a sense of continual dependence on God as children depend on their parents, that we must look to Him in every need, as they do to their elders. Am I childlike in these respects, or am I stiff-necked and stubborn and independent?

Twenty-third Week: Monday.

The Rich Young Man.

St. Mark x. 17—27.

A young man came and asked, "Good Master, what shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?" When Jesus answered that he must keep the commandments, the young man assured Him that he had done so from his youth. Then Jesus said, "One thing is wanting to thee; sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me." Then the young man departed in sorrow, for he had great riches, and was not willing to abandon them.

1. The rich young man had always lived a good and upright life, so that our Lord loved him. But there came to him a further grace. Jesus invited him to give up his riches and follow Him. So with the hearts of those who live a life of obedience to God's law, higher graces always are given, to be generous with God as well as to fulfil the law of justice.

2. But unhappily for him he had great possessions, and these had gradually been gaining dominion over his heart; and when our Lord called him, and there came to him the grace to give up all for God's sake, he turned away sad, and would not give them up. O how great is the danger of a man whose heart clings to his possessions! God grant that my heart may not cling to any earthly good.

3. For all there is at some time a decisive crisis, a choice between treasure on earth and treasure in Heaven. Alas for those who at such a crisis fail of the grace given them, and reject the secret inspiration! Help me, O God, when such a time comes to me; may I always listen to Thee and follow Thee!

Twenty-third Week: Tuesday.

The Evangelical Counsels.

St. Matt. xix. 23—30.

When the rich young man had departed, our Lord dwelt on the difficulty of salvation to the rich. In answer to St. Peter's inquiry what reward would be given to those who leave all and follow Christ, our Lord promises a hundred-fold in this life, and in the world to come life everlasting.

1. Why is it so difficult for the rich to be saved? Because riches tend to make a man lose his sense of dependence. Is it impossible for the rich to be saved? Certainly not. The power of God can do anything; it can make a camel pass through the eye of a needle, and it will enable a rich man to become detached from his riches and escape the fatal peril of trusting in them. If we are rich, let us beware of the danger that riches involve; if poor, let us thank God that we are free from it.

2. But there is one means of escape, and only one. He must make some sacrifice by way of generous alms if he wish to die a happy death, and to escape the enthralling influence of wealth. But those to whom God gives the grace of a complete relinquishment of their possessions will have a far larger reward.

3. What is this reward? It is the gift of a far greater and higher happiness than they could ever have attained from their wealth, and in Heaven the certain promise of everlasting life. This will be the recompense of all who have given up anything, whether great or small, for Christ's sake; for He looks to the generosity of heart, not merely to the external act.

Twenty-third Week: Wednesday.

Coming Troubles.

St. Matt. xxiv. 4—11.

Our Lord predicts to His disciples many sorrows before His return to judge the world. There are to be wars, famines, and pestilences. False prophets are to arise and to seduce many. Those faithful to Christ are to be hated, afflicted, persecuted, and put to death.

1. The history of the Church of Christ is anything but a series of triumphs. It always has been and always will be persecuted, first in one country and then in another; and as the end draws near, persecution will be more cruel, more subtle, more persistent than ever. The Immaculate Bride of Christ must share the fortunes of her Spouse. It is a mark of her union to Christ that she has to suffer with Him. Rejoice in being a child of the suffering Spouse of Christ, and not of the bedecked and bedizened queens that hate her, persecute her, and seek in vain to imitate her matchless beauty.

2. As time goes on, false prophets will arise and will lead many astray. False Reformers, Revivalists, Gospel Evangelists, servants of the State who place it above the Church, or seek to sever it from her dominion. What a countless multitude of those servants of Satan! Alas, how many they have seduced! Thank God you are not of them.

3. Apart from persecution by wicked men, the faithful children of the Church will always have to suffer. First one trouble, then another—sickness, sorrow, poverty, humiliations—these are the friends in painful guise that lead us to Heaven. Courage, then! If we patiently suffer with Him now, we shall one day reign with Him in glory.

Twenty-third Week: Thursday.

The Signs of His Approach.

St. Matt. xxiv. 10—12.

Three signs will manifest the time of our Lord's second coming. (1) Many shall be scandalized. (2) Charity shall grow cold. (3) Iniquity shall abound.

1. To be easily scandalized is always a sign of a falling away from the love of Christ. "Blessed are they that love Thy law," says the Psalmist, "they shall not be scandalized in it." They know their own good-will and honesty, and they attribute the same to others. On the contrary, those who are themselves weak in virtue, are always talking scandal to what they see around them, and imputing bad motives. To which class do I belong?

2. Charity shall grow cold. The first fervour of the Christian Church did not last long. When prosperity and wealth and power fell to her lot, her children began to grow cold in their charity. There are sad periods in the history of the Church. God in His mercy never forsook her, and sent holy men to renew the waning love and zeal of Catholics. But as the end draws near, there will be a sad falling away. When I look over my own history, is it like that of the Christian world—first fervour, then coldness? Alas, I fear it is; at all events, I have not advanced in fervour as I ought.

3. Iniquity shall abound. When we look into the modern world, we recognize this sign of our Lord's approach. Under a fair guise, how much hidden vice, how much secret pride! What selfishness! What forgetfulness of God! In my heart there is, alas, a similar festering sore under what is perhaps a fair exterior.

Twenty-third Week: Friday.
The Suddenness of His Coming.

St. Matt. xxiv. 37—44.

The second coming of the Son of Man is to be sudden and unexpected, like the Flood in the days of Noe. Hence the necessity of continual watchfulness.

1. The Church of Christ has always been expecting the coming of our Lord. St. Paul speaks of it as very near at hand. In the Apocalypse of St. John, Christ says, "Behold, I come quickly." In the early ages and the middle ages of the Church, there has been a continual expectancy of His speedy return. This is a recognition that He will come when we do not look for Him. I therefore must be ever expecting Him if I would not be taken by surprise.

2. The world will go on with its business and pleasures just as usual up to the moment when the Archangel's trumpet shall summon men to judgment. As before the Flood, they will eat and drink, and marry and be given in marriage, as if the world was going to last for ever. So the world acts now. Who would think that they will in a few years, one and all, have to give a strict account of every deed and word and thought? Is not my life in this respect too much like that of the thoughtless world around?

3. Watch. This is the soldier's motto, and must be the Christian's. Watch against temptation; watch against occasions of sin; watch for your Lord's coming. Do you not already see in the horizon signs of His approach, tokens that you have not long to wait before your turn will come? Be ready, then, for you know not when the Son of Man shall come.

Twenty-third Week: Saturday.

The Labourers in the Vineyard.

St. Matt. xx. 1—16.

Our Lord describes the Kingdom of Heaven as like to a householder, who goes out at various times in the day, and invites those who are standing idle to go and work in his vineyard. In the evening he gave the same pay to all.

1. At various periods of life God calls men to serve Him. Sometimes in early life He binds them close to Him. Sometimes He leaves them half their days without any extraordinary graces or special inspirations. Sometimes in old age the light comes which never shone before. God gives at some period some special inspiration to labour for Him. We must listen intently for the voice of God speaking to us. All our happiness depends upon our obeying His call.

2. God gives the same reward to those who have laboured for a long or for a short time, if the latter obeyed His voice as soon as they heard it calling them. To all in Heaven He will give the same recompense of the Beatific Vision; but the degrees of bliss will depend on faithfulness to grace. Those who lived but ordinary lives in the world, or were pagans or Protestants half their days or more, will have the same reward as those who consecrated themselves to God from childhood, if they had the same graces at last, and were equally faithful to them.

3. In the parable some are displeased at the privileges of others, and insist on their own fancied right to receive more than they. Such jealousy is hateful in God's sight. If God in His Divine generosity gives to others unearned gifts, we should rejoice in their happiness.

Twenty-fourth Week: Sunday.

The Petition of the Sons of Zebedee.

St. Matt. xx. 20—23.

SS. James and John come with their mother to our Lord, asking for the privilege of sitting next Him in His Kingdom. Jesus answers that they do not know what they ask, and inquires whether they are able to drink of His chalice? They say: "We can." Jesus tells them that they shall do so, but that the first seats in His Kingdom will be given to those for whom they are prepared by His Father.

1. The request of the sons of Zebedee seems to have been the outcome of love for Christ, mingled with ambition. Ambition is a good thing if it is not a selfish or worldly ambition, but an ambition to be high in the ranks of those who love God and are loved by Him, and so to be nearer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This should be our constant aim, to deserve a high place in the assembly of the lovers of Jesus.

2. The condition of a high place in the love of Jesus is a large share in His sufferings. All who are His dearly-beloved here are to drink of His chalice. If Christ were to ask us, Can you drink of the chalice that I drink of, the chalice of neglect, of outrage and contempt and unkindness, of interior darkness and a death of agony, could we answer generously, as did James and John, Yes, Lord, we can, not by our strength, but by Thy grace?

3. The high places in Heaven are to be given not to those who merely ask for them, but to those who deserve them. They are reserved for those who hear the Word of God, and do it; for those who amid the difficulties and hardships, persevere in obedience to God and loyalty to Him. Am I such?

Twenty-fourth Week: Monday.

The Blind Men of Jericho.

St. Matt. xx. 29—34.

As Jesus went out of Jericho, followed by a great crowd, two blind men who sat begging by the road-side cried out, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on us!" Then Jesus stood still, and asked them what they desired. On their replying: "Lord, that our eyes be opened," He touched their eyes, and at once they saw and followed Him.

1. Try and picture the scene. A great crowd following Jesus and these two blind men shouting: "Jesus, have mercy upon us!" See Jesus listening, stopping, speaking to them, and learn from this that He never loses sight of any individual in the crowd. He has thoughts of love and plans of mercy for me. If I cry loud enough, He will stop and listen, and hear and answer my petition.

2. The prayer of these two blind men was that their eyes might be opened. How sadly we need that our blindness should be dispelled by Jesus! Our sins have gathered like a mist around our eyes. We cannot see the beauty of holiness and the hideousness of sin, and the happiness of serving God. Open my eyes, O Lord, to see all this, that so I may forsake my sins and serve Thee with my whole heart.

3. When those blind men recovered their sight at Jesus' touch, at once they followed Him. This should be the effect of all the mercy Christ has shown me, and the graces He has lavished on me. I must follow Him more closely, more obediently, with a greater desire to imitate Him, to love Him, to suffer with Him even unto death.

Twenty-fourth Week: Tuesday.

The Conversion of Zaccheus.

St. Luke xix. 2—10.

Zaccheus, a chief among the publicans, climbed into a sycamore-tree that he might see Jesus as He passed. When Jesus came to the place He looked up, and bade Him descend, as that day He would lodge in Zaccheus' house. Zaccheus on the occasion of Jesus' visit, gave half his goods to the poor, and offered four-fold restitution to any he had wronged.

1. Our Lord's Heart is always won by those who take trouble for His sake. Ascetical writers teach us that the sycamore-tree is an emblem of the Cross, because suffering is necessary to solid progress in virtue, and that Zaccheus climbing into it was an instance of one who accepted the folly of the Cross, which is the truest wisdom for those who long after an intimate union with Jesus.

2. Jesus espied Zaccheus in the tree. He promises that He will be his guest, publican and sinner as Zaccheus was. So he is always ready to come and be our guest in Holy Communion, if we (1) long after Him as Zaccheus did, (2) obey His word, (3) are prompt in following His inspirations, (4) count it a joy and happiness to have Him for our Divine Guest.

3. Observe the effect of our Lord's presence in his house. (1) The avaricious publican gives half his goods to the poor. (2) He promises four-fold restitution if any one has anything against him. Thus it is that our Lord enables us to expel from our souls even the most deeply rooted and inveterate faults.

Twenty-fourth Week: Wednesday.

The Lord and his Servants.

St. Luke xix. 11—28.

A nobleman about to leave his home for a time gives his ten servants each a pound with which to trade for their master. On his return he finds that one has gained ten, another five pounds. But one of them had kept the pound wrapped up in a napkin. The lord rewards the faithful servants and condemns the one who had made nothing.

1. These pounds are the graces that God gives to us gratuitously. They are not purely a gift, but a gift that carries with them a serious responsibility. This is true of all God's gifts: health, strength, money, success, and above all, supernatural graces. We have to answer for each; they are given to us to trade withal for our Master's glory. If we are not our own, much more the gifts God has put into our hands are not our own but His. Do I use them with this fact ever before my eyes?

2. The pounds traded with produced more pounds. So God's graces if rightly used produce fresh graces. Our Lady's immeasurable grace was the result of her invariable faithfulness to grace. If I want more grace from God, the only way to obtain it is to make a faithful use of the graces I possess.

3. Notice the magnificence of the reward; a city, in reward for a pound well used. Notice also the exact proportion between the sum acquired and the dominion granted. In Heaven our reward will be magnificent beyond our highest expectations, but always in proportion to our faithfulness to grace during our time of probation.

Twenty-fourth Week: Thursday.

The Procession of Palms.

St. Luke xix. 29—38.

When our Lord approached Jerusalem, a great multitude went out to meet and welcome Him. Some spread their garments in the way, others strewed branches on the ground, and the children cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David." Among them rode our Lord, seated on an ass, meek and humble of heart, with mingled sentiments of joy and sorrow.

1. The entry into Jerusalem was the occasion on which the multitudes openly recognized Christ as their King, as coming with authority from God Himself. The palm branches were their testimony that He had triumphed over His enemies; the garments strewn in the way was their declaration of submission to Him; and the cry of Hosanna was the prayer that God might prosper Him in His Mission. Rejoice in this recognition of His Divine authority, of His triumph over His enemies, of your subjection to Him, and to others for His sake; and pray that His Kingdom may be spread over the earth more and more.

2. In the midst of all this pageant rode Jesus, meek and humble, mounted on an ass. Those plaudits of the multitude, how little they affected Him; yet He rejoiced in their loyalty, and in their good-will. Pray that in the midst of applause you may be meek, as He was.

3. Mingled with His joy was a bitter sorrow at the knowledge that in a few days, the fickle crowd would shout: "Crucify Him!" He anticipated the scene close at hand, when those He loved would reject Him and desire His death. Learn of Him to see the worthlessness of popularity, and be willing to bear reproach with Him.

Twenty-fourth Week: Friday.

Christ weeps over Jerusalem.

St. Luke xix. 41—44.

As our Lord drew near to Jerusalem, He began to weep over it, and to say: "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace! But now they are hidden from thine eyes." He then foretold the coming destruction of the city.

1. Jesus, looking down upon the city of Jerusalem, was full of sorrow at the thought of its approaching doom. He loved Jerusalem, and His own nation. Loyalty to our country is a duty to God, as well as an instinct of the human heart. Every good man is a patriot. But our patriotism must be a desire above all that our land and city may be faithful to God, not merely that it may be great among the nations of the earth.

2. The cause of the grief of Jesus was the thought of what Jerusalem might have been, as compared with what it was. Alas, over how many cities He may well weep now! What might they have been if their rulers had been faithful to God, and what are they—London, Paris, Vienna, the once Christian city of Constantine? What awful paganism, luxury, corruption, pride! We ought to pray for the nations thus robbed of their inheritance by heresy and sin.

3. Over many an individual too our Lord utters the same mournful words: "If thou hadst known!" If only thou hadst listened to the secret inspirations of grace, thou mightest have been a saint; and now——. Grant, O Lord, that my ears may not be deaf to the things that make for my eternal peace!

Twenty-fourth Week: Saturday.

On Death to the World.

St. John xii. 20—25.

On the occasion of certain Gentiles desiring to see our Lord, He answers that the time is at hand when He is to be glorified over the whole world. Before this He must be like a grain of wheat, which, unless it die, remains alone; but if it falls into the earth and disappears, it brings forth much fruit.

1. During our Lord's Ministry He had instructed His Apostles not to go into the cities or ways of the Gentiles. But now a new era is at hand, and the Son of Man is to be glorified by Gentiles as well as by Jews. The Gospel of Christ is all-embracing. There is place for all in the Kingdom of Heaven. Thank God for the universality of the Church, and pray that you may find a place in it.

2. Our Lord's glory and the spread of His Kingdom is only to be attained by His death. He is that Divine grain of wheat which falls into the barren earth and makes it to fructify by His Passion and Crucifixion. This law of the humiliation and annihilation of self as the condition of future glory and success in work for God extends even to Jesus. How much more is it necessary for sinful men!

3. This is the fact that I must face. I must die to myself and to the world if I am to take part in the spread of Christ's Kingdom. I must practise unselfishness, be willing to be overlooked and forgotten, live a hidden life, suffer and be subject. Is this my temper, or do I want to be prominent and highly esteemed?

Twenty-fifth Week: Sunday.

The Barren Fig-tree.

St. Matt. xxi. 19.

Jesus walking one morning into Jerusalem and being hungry, seeing a fig-tree on the way, came to seek figs on it. Finding none, but leaves only, He said, "May no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." And presently the fig-tree withered away.

1. The fig-tree was a symbol of the Synagogue of the Jews, sightly enough and apparently flourishing, but wholly destitute of fruit. External rites and ceremonies, long prayers for ostentation's sake, alms given from natural benevolence or for show, and not with a supernatural motive, were the general characteristics of the Jews of our Lord's day. The same dangers still exist. We may easily spoil what we do by our vanity and love of self, and so produce only leaves, not fruit.

2. It was not yet the time of figs. But the time is always present of bringing forth good fruit to God. It is dangerous indeed to say, the time has not yet come for me to devote myself to God; to-morrow, or at some future time, I will listen to His inspirations, for this time may never come.

3. The time of figs never came to the fig-tree in this parable, for Christ's malediction left it powerless to bring forth fruit. How sad would be my lot if such a curse were to fall on me. Christ is very patient, but the time may at length come, if I do not bear fruit, when He will say: From thee no fruit henceforward! I must be up and doing; working not for myself, but for the honour of Christ Jesus my Lord.

Twenty-fifth Week: Monday.

On Confidence in Prayer.

St. Mark xi. 22—24.

When the disciples observed that the fig-tree had withered away at our Lord's word, He takes occasion to urge the importance of confidence in prayer. "Whatever you shall ask in prayer *believing*, you shall receive. Whoever shall have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, if he shall say to a mountain, Take up and cast thyself into the sea, it shall be done."

1. Confidence is no less a requisite in prayer than persistence and humility. Men are much more ready to grant the petitions of those who approach them with a respectful boldness. So it is with God. He likes us to assume as a matter of course that we shall be heard. Do I come with this confidence before God, to ask what I need?

2. Why is it that we have so little confidence? It is not that we doubt the power of God, or even His goodness. It is not the fact of our past sins. It is our present love of self. It is the want of perfect conformity to His will that saps our confidence. We hold something back which we have not given with all our heart to God. We are not generous with Him, and so we naturally conclude that He will not be generous with us.

3. What ought to be the ground of our confidence? The love of Jesus for every one who is a member of His Spouse the Church. He cannot help loving His immaculate Spouse and every member of it. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." We always feel at our ease with those who we know love us, and none loves us like Jesus. Hence we should be at our ease with Him, and this confidence will obtain all we ask.

Twenty-fifth Week: Tuesday.

Our Lord's Authority to Teach.

St. Matt. xxi. 23—27.

When the Chief Priests and Ancients questioned our Lord as to His authority to teach, He asked them in reply whence John the Baptist derived his authority? This question they could not answer. Our Lord answered that as they could not tell, so neither would He tell them whence His own authority was derived.

1. This question of the Chief Priests was a clear mark of their hatred of the truth. They had seen in Jesus marvels that God alone could work, and had heard from His lips words which God alone could inspire. Yet they objected to His teaching on the ground that He had received no commission to teach. We can always raise objections to the actions of those we dislike and regard with an evil eye. We question their authority and dispute their power.

2. Selfishness and jealousy of others always defeats its own end. The Ancients and Pharisees, by keeping aloof from St. John, and refusing to acknowledge his Divine mission, were furnishing a weapon that our Lord turned against themselves. They had hated John and had rejected his teaching, yet they dare not deny his authority to be from God. So it always is with the selfish: while seeking to secure their own interests, they are their own worst enemies.

3. When men came to our Lord as humble searchers after truth, He never left them in doubt as to His claims on their allegiance. But the Chief Priests had forfeited grace; their eyes and ears were closed to the truth. O unhappy condition! What more hopeless? May God in mercy save me from it.

Twenty-fifth Week: Wednesday.

The Disobedient Sons.

St. Matt. xxi. 28—32.

"A certain man had two sons, and to the first he said, Son, go work to-day in my vineyard. He said, I will not; but afterwards, moved with repentance, he went. The second answered, I go, sir, and went not. Which of these two," asks our Lord of the Priests and Ancients, "did the will of his father?" When they answered, The first, He tells them that the publicans and harlots will go into the Kingdom of Heaven before them.

1. The elder son in the parable was by no means a dutiful child. He refused to obey his father's command, but afterwards he repented and obeyed. I resemble this son in his early disobedience. Many and many a time God has ordered me or asked me to do something for Him, and I have virtually said, I will not. Have I since repented of my disobedience, and does He ever ask of me now some little act of charity or self-denial or humility, and do I answer in my heart, I will not?

2. The second son was a fair-spoken man, yet in his heart he was determined to follow his own will, not his father's; and in spite of his promise, he never obeyed the command given him. Am I not too much like him? In my prayers I say beautiful things to God. But when it comes to practice, I do not even attempt to carry out His inspiration.

3. The Pharisees in their pride fancied they were on the high-road to Heaven. What can they have thought of our Lord's words: "The publicans and harlots shall go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you"? I, too, who am so proud, must listen and hear our Lord saying the same to me; and I must humble myself accordingly, and see how much better they are than I.

Twenty-fifth Week: Thursday.

The Question of the Sadducees.

St. Luke xx. 27—40.

The Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body, asked our Lord whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection if she had been married several times on earth. Jesus answered that they were in error, not knowing the Scriptures, for in the resurrection none would marry, but all would live an angelic life. After this none of them dared to ask Him any more questions.

1. The Sadducees maliciously thought that they would puzzle our Lord by the objection they proposed to the resurrection of the body, and thus secure the double end of putting Him to shame and making His doctrine ridiculous. How vain their efforts! All the attacks of wicked men on God and truth will one day turn to their own confusion. We must be patient.

2. The Pharisees first misrepresented the teaching of Christ and then proceeded to demolish their own misrepresentation. So heretics misrepresent the doctrines of the Church—the Immaculate Conception, Eternal Punishment, Indulgences, Papal Infallibility, and the like—and then proceed to confute their own garbled version of the truth. Make an act of faith in the reasonableness as well as the truth of all that the Church teaches.

3. Our Lord tells the Sadducees that in Heaven all natural love will be swallowed up in supernatural. We shall love father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, in God and for God, and not with any love that would interfere with others loving them too. Even in this world all our love for others must be unselfish if it is to endure.

Twenty-fifth Week: Friday.

The Vineyard and the Husbandmen.

St. Matt. xxi. 33—41.

A man had a vineyard which he let out to husbandmen. When the vintage drew near, he sent his servants to receive the produce due to him. But the husbandmen beat and ill-treated those who were sent, and killed some of them. At last he sent his son, saying, "They will reverence my son." But the husbandmen said, "This is the heir; let us kill him." What, asks our Lord, will the lord of the vineyard do to these wicked men?

1. The vineyard of the parable was the Jewish Church. To the Jews God sent prophets, whom they ill-used; and at last His own beloved Son, Whom they rejected, outraged, and put to death. What accounts for their extraordinary perversity? Pride, and the rebellion consequent on pride. We see it in the stories of Saul, Ahab, and others. Learn to hate pride.

2. Authority came to them at last in the form of the Son of God, meek and humble of heart, who went about doing good, whose gentleness and love won all men of good-will. Even Him they hated—nay, hated Him more than all because He spoke with paramount authority. Such is the result of pride. It tends to make us dislike even the authority that we know comes from Heaven. Grant me, O Lord, the spirit of submission and true humility.

3. Pride brings its own fall. Its short-lived triumphs are followed by its destruction and abasement. The Lord will come and crush the proud under His feet. He will drive them out from their inheritance. This is the story of apostasy from the truth: it is always pride. This is the reason why so many who begin well end miserably.

Twenty-fifth Week: Saturday.

The Wedding of the King's Son.

St. Matt. xxii. 2—13.

A king made a marriage-feast for his son, and invited many. But they neglected the invitation, and put to death those sent to invite them. Then the king being angry told his servants to go into the highways and call any they could find. When the king came to see the guests, there was one who had not on a wedding garment. The king ordered him to be bound hand and foot, and cast into the exterior darkness.

1. The feast to which God invites His guests is the feast of graces in this life and of glory in the next. How many He summons in vain! Those outside the Church He calls to enter in. Those living in the world He calls it may be to the religious life, or to some form of penance, or to a life of greater devotion. With those who refuse His invitation He is justly angry. O my God, I thank Thee that I have not substantially neglected Thy invitation!

2. Into the Church are gathered good and bad, so that it is filled with a variety of guests. So to the religious life it is not only the virtuous and holy that are called. Happy it is for me that God calls not the just only, but sinners also, else where would be my present privileges?

3. In the Catholic Church, even in the religious life, there may be some who have lost the wedding garment of charity. Alas for them, if the King comes while they are without it! Their lot will be exterior darkness for ever. I must be very careful not to forfeit the possession of this precious garment, or, if I should lose it, to regain it without delay by contrition and penance.

Twenty-sixth Week: Sunday.

Cæsar and God.

St. Matt. xxii. 15—21.

The Pharisees send their disciples with the Herodians to question Christ as to whether it is lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not. He sees through their wiles, and, asking for a piece of money, elicits from them that the current coinage bears Cæsar's image upon it, and they are, therefore, to render to Cæsar what is acknowledged as his, and to God what is due to Him.

1. See the bitter malice of the Pharisees! How they hate Jesus! His holiness, purity, humility, charity, unselfishness were a reproach to their worldliness, impurity, selfishness, pride. I must be on my guard against a certain tendency to be jealous of those who are better than I am and are preferred to me. Instead of this I must try and imitate their virtues.

2. The questioners thought to show Christ either as a rebel or unpatriotic. But He utterly defeats them by His answer. Their acceptance of the Roman coinage was an acknowledgment of the Roman power, and therefore made it lawful, if not obligatory, to pay the tribute to Rome. Admire Christ's Divine prudence, and ask Him to give you the grace of prudent and unoffending words.

3. In the words, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's," our Lord lays down the principle of civil and religious obligation. We must not neglect one for the other; both come from God. True religion can never make us unpatriotic or disobedient to lawful authority, and true patriotism and loyalty can never interfere with our duty to God and to the Church. But when the State goes beyond its proper sphere, then we must neglect all to obey God.

Twenty-sixth Week: Monday.

The Widow's Mite.

St. Mark xii. 41—44.

Our Lord sitting near the Treasury saw the people casting in their money, and many who were rich cast in much: a poor widow cast in a farthing. Jesus calls His disciples, and tells them that she has cast in more than all the rest, for she has given all she possessed to God.

1. Jesus watching the people casting the money into the treasury of the Temple was doing what He still continues to do, when there is a question of giving money for some pious end. He watches and sees what each gives, whether in the generosity of their heart they give the most they can, or whether they give, on the other hand, as little as possible. Which is my disposition when I am asked to give? Shall I obtain the large benediction that He bestows on the generous giver?

2. Yet generosity does not depend on the amount given, but on its proportion to the resources of the giver. To give a thousand pounds in charity may not be as generous a gift to God as to give a shilling or even less. We must give what will cost us something. If our charity is to be the pure gold that wins the heart of God, it must involve some self-denial.

3. The gift of the poor widow did more than cost her a slight self-denial. It left her penniless. How contrary her action to human prudence! But in the eyes of God it was the truest wisdom. What faith she must have had! What charity! No fear that she would be left in want. God would provide for her, and that most liberally, as He always does for those who are liberal with Him. Am I ready thus to give all to God?

Twenty-sixth Week: Tuesday.

The Great Commandment.

St. Matt. xxii. 35—40.

One of the Scribes asked our Lord, "Which is the great commandment of the Law?" He answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and thy whole soul and thy whole mind. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole Law and the Prophets."

1. The centre of all sanctity is the love of God. We must love Him with our whole soul and heart and mind. The affectionate loyalty of our hearts must be given entirely to Him, our bodies must be consecrated to Him, and our intellectual powers must be used for Him. Alas! how defective is my love and service! Can I say that my heart is wholly fixed on God?

2. The second law of holiness is no less binding than the first. It flows from it and is inseparable from it. We must love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This is a very high standard, and few indeed are they who attain it. Yet it is what God requires. It is a command, not a counsel, that we should regard the interests of others as our own. This is the great lesson of Christ's life. To what extent have I learned it?

3. The obstacle to the keeping of these commandments is self-love. It prevents our loving God wholly, since He will brook no rival; and it prevents our loving our neighbour as ourselves, for it makes us postpone our neighbour's interests to our own. Yet this is fatal to all true self-love and self-interest. Those who forget themselves are those who alone promote their own interest and their happiness.

Twenty-sixth Week: Wednesday.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees."

St. Matt. xxiii. 1—36.

In a discourse addressed to the multitude and to His disciples, our Lord enjoins obedience to the Scribes and Pharisees as official exponents of the Law of Moses, but warns His hearers against imitating their works, and denounces them for their hypocrisy, formality, inconsistency, ambition, pride.

1. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees!" This is a terrible denunciation coming from the mouth of God Incarnate. Christ thus denounces the Scribes and Pharisees because of (*a*) their self-exaltation. They love the first places at feasts, to be saluted as Rabbi, and to be accounted great. (*b*) Their hypocrisy. They make long prayers and profess great zeal, and meanwhile are guilty of scandal and injustice. (*c*) Their neglect of the essentials of the Law, judgment, justice, and truth, while they insist on the accidental duties of an exact payment of tithes and alms. (*d*) Their pretended indignation against the wickedness of their fathers in persecuting the prophets, while they themselves are just as bad. Examine yourself on these points, lest Christ say "Woe" to you.

2. All this corruption on the part of the Pharisees arose from their being puffed up by the respect shown to them by the people, and taking to themselves the honour paid to their office. This is a serious danger to all whose position entitles them to respect. They forget that those who occupy high places are bound for that very reason to esteem themselves the least and lowest.

3. How did the Scribes and Pharisees take our Lord's warnings? They were only the more embittered against Him. Woe to me, if I take reproof as they did.

Twenty-sixth Week: Thursday.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins.

St. Matt. xxv. 1–13.

There were ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. Five were wise and five were foolish. The wise virgins took a good supply of oil in their lamps, but the foolish virgins took no oil. When the bridegroom came, the wise virgins were ready to meet him with lamps trimmed and burning. The foolish virgins, finding that their lamps had gone out, went to buy some oil and so were too late for the marriage, and were shut out.

1. The oil in the lamps of the virgins is the pure intention that makes us labour for God's glory, not for our own, and guide our lives by His holy inspirations and according to the Divine law, not by our own impulses and inclinations. Without this, the light that is in us is nothing else but darkness. Do I in my lamp carry this oil of Divine charity?

2. All ten were virgins, notes St. Gregory, but only five were admitted to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. It is not enough to be free from gross sin and do no harm. Without supernatural charity our natural virtues may even be a misfortune to us, if we trust to them and forget that they are worthless in the sight of God as a source of merit on earth or of glory in Heaven.

3. Those who were once shut out from the bridal feast vainly sought for admittance. Those who are shut out by the Particular Judgment from the Kingdom of Heaven are shut out for ever. What a terrible thought for me! How carefully I must watch, with the lamp of charity burning brightly. "Blessed is the man whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching!"

Twenty-sixth Week: Friday.

The Parable of the Talents.

St. Matt. xxv. 14—30.

A man going into a far country gives to his various servants goods according to their ability. On his return the one servant who had received five talents, brought another five. Another, who had received two, brought another two, and so on. These servants are praised and richly rewarded by their master. One, however, who had received only one talent, had hidden it in the earth instead of trading with it. The master orders that he shall be cast into exterior darkness, and his talent given to the one who already has ten.

1. Observe that of those servants who have received much from God, far more is expected than from others. God has given me so much, so many opportunities for serving Him, so many endowments in the order of nature as well as graces beyond the average of men. God will expect of me a corresponding return.

2. The servant who had the smallest amount, was condemned for not employing it. If I have small talents, this will not excuse me if I neglect to use for God what I have. Notice, too, that this servant did not waste the money. His condemnation was for not gaining more for his master. It is not enough to do no harm. This will not save us; we must do positive good, if we wish to go to Heaven.

3. The graces that are neglected by some pass on to others. The talent of the idle servant is given to him that has gained the most by trading. How easy to lose graces! I must beware lest the graces God would fain have given me be bestowed elsewhere because of my ingratitude.

Twenty-sixth Week: Saturday.

The Final Judgment.

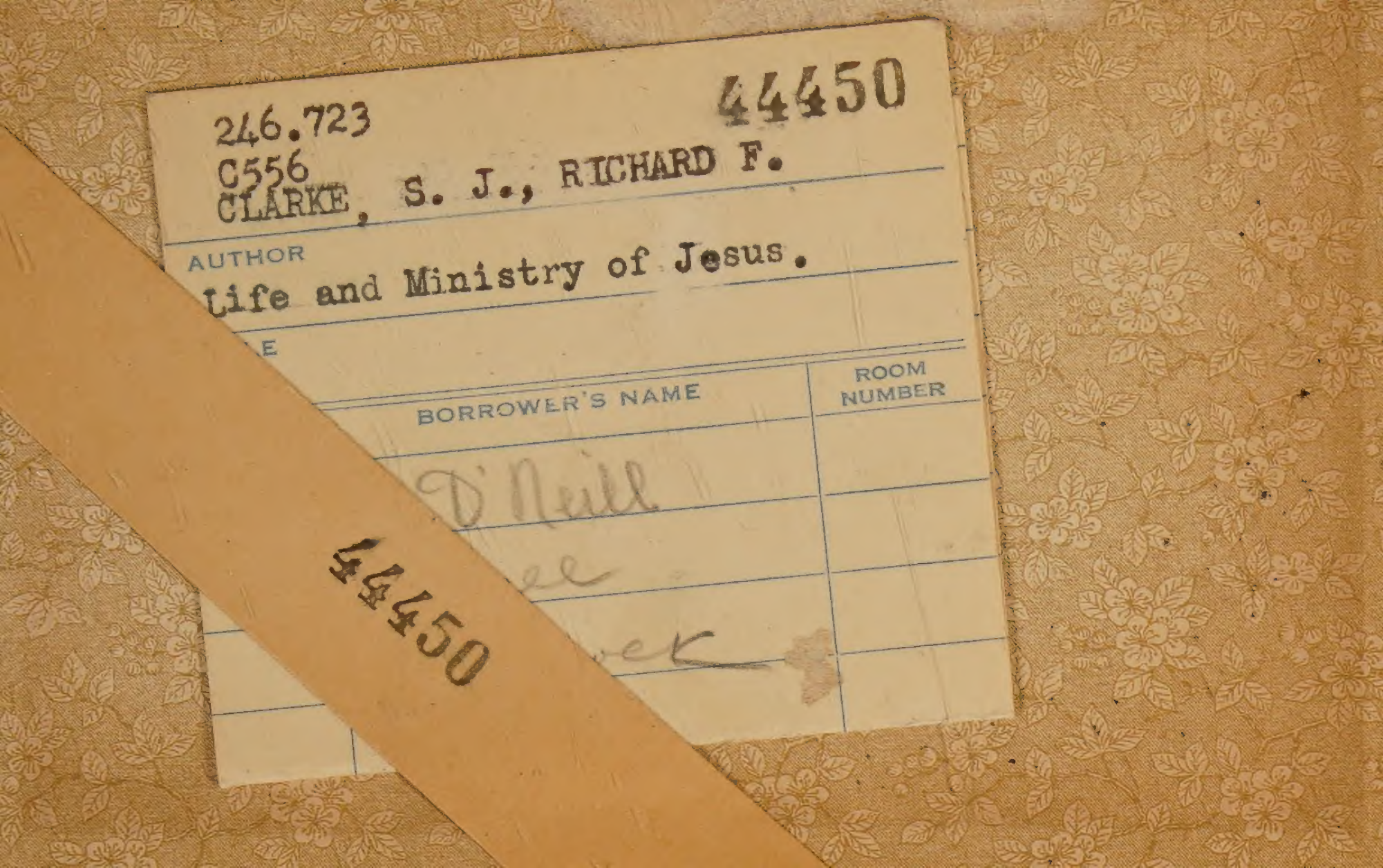
St. Matt. xxv. 31—46.

When the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, He will summon all mankind before Him; the just on His right hand, the wicked on His left. To the former He will say: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." To the latter: "Depart, ye cursed."

1. Try to realize that day, when the whole world will be assembled, and you amongst them, before the throne of the majesty of Jesus Christ. On which side should you be found now? How will you endure to have all your hidden actions and secret thoughts made known to all? Have you not cause to tremble at that inevitable scene in which, whether you are willing or not, you must take a part?

2. The chief cause of terror to the wicked will be the wrath of Him who sits upon the throne as their Judge. His Divine beauty will make them long after Him, but His anger will make them long, in an agony of fear, to hide themselves from His sight. There is no misery to be compared to the misery of having Christ angry with us. Pray that you may never give Him cause to be angry with you.

3. The distinguishing mark between the just and the wicked is charity to others for Christ's sake. Christ speaks of this as the passport to Heaven. Not a word about any virtues save this. Why is this? Because self-denying charity for Christ's sake carries with it all other virtues and hides a multitude of sins. Is self-denying charity the distinguishing mark of my life?


246.723
C556
CLARKE, S. J., RICHARD F.
44450
AUTHOR
Life and Ministry of Jesus.
BORROWER'S NAME
ROOM NUMBER
44450